

## Introducing the “Ibnosina Medical Writing Project”

Representation of developing countries to medical literature is of ethical concern. Over the years, it became known as “north-south” divide as well as the 10/90 divide. Several studies illustrated this notion convincingly.<sup>[1-3]</sup> Analysis of articles published in a year in five biomedical journals showed that the contributions from the parts of the world other than Europe, North America, and Oceania were very low at 6.5%.<sup>[1]</sup> Another survey of articles published in top 50 journals between 1995 and 2002 showed that the USA ranked the highest in publications followed by Canada and Western Europe. The rest of the world came far behind.<sup>[2]</sup> A third study showed that Western Europe leads the world in research on infectious diseases-microbiology and in cardiopulmonary medicine whereas the USA ranks first in the fields of preventive medicine, public health, and epidemiology.<sup>[3]</sup> All of the developing regions had only small contributions in research in all of the biomedical fields examined.<sup>[3]</sup>

This global divide is predictably the result of developing countries lagging behind in material resources, human expertise, organizational settings, and academic traditions. Rahman and Fukui examined the factors related to worldwide variation in biomedical research productivity.<sup>[4]</sup> In a multiple regression model, gross national product per capita and research and development expenditure emerged as significant factors.<sup>[4]</sup> These findings indicate the urgent need for both adequate funding and effective organization of research as a prerequisite for developed countries to move forward in this context. For developing regions, selection of areas of research that can be conducted with limited resources is crucial for financial survival. Success of research will be marked by publication of research papers. Fortunately, the planning and conduct of research and effective scientific writing are transferable skills that can be thought and learned.

This editorial introduces a series of special communications and practice points on authorship and effective medical writing that will appear each issue in the remainder of 2018 and throughout 2019. We will start by two special communications. The first will revisit the authorship rules and realities.<sup>[5]</sup> The second one will address the cause roots, forms, and resolution of authorship disputes with illustrative examples.<sup>[6]</sup> The “practice point” series will elaborate on the process of writing and publishing from starting to write the first draft of a paper to responding to reviewer comments [Table 1].

The primary target audience is young and aspiring academic researchers and potential authors although the series may also be of value for other physicians who mentor less experienced colleagues or who are joining the research movement later in their career. Writing skills are usually learned the hard

**Table 1: The themes to be covered in the “Practice Point” series on effective medical writing**

1. How to get started, agreeing authorship, choice of journal
2. Manuscript title, abstract, and introduction
3. Describing patients, materials, and methods
4. Presenting results and balancing the text, tables, and figures
5. Focusing the discussion and appropriate use of literature citations
6. Submitting a paper and responding to reviewers

way by doing it and receiving feedback on drafts from their supervisors, coauthors, and journals. However, busy editors and volunteering reviewers have no time to spare for guiding authors when articles are fundamentally poorly written. Nurturing young researchers and authors building reviewing capacity have been among the main objectives of the mission of IJMBS and its affiliated Ibnosina Medical Association right from the time of their inception.<sup>[7,8]</sup>

The content of the series will be taken as core curriculum for a training course of effective medical writing in collaboration between the Ibnosina Medical Association and Journal with Dubai Medical College, and we hope to make all the supporting audiovisual material available through our websites. The “Practice Point” series is focusing on writing principles and methodology. It is written as a general guidance for writing to get published in biomedical journals and not as a specific guidance for this journal. It is meant to address the basic aspects of writing and publishing in a generic manner without going into specific details. For example, it does not provide specific information for writing case reports, narrative reviews, conference reporting, and clinical pictorial vignettes which can be readily found in other articles. We do hope it will be useful for aspiring authors and their mentors.

### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

### Compliance with ethical principles

Not applicable.

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