



Reporting and Publishing Research in the Biomedical Sciences. Peush Sahni and Rakesh Aggarwal (eds). *The National Medical Journal of India*, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Ansari Nagar, New Delhi 110 029. 2016. xx + 326 pp. Price: not mentioned.

A revised edition, claims the neatly designed front cover of this book. The first edition was published in 2015. A revised edition, so quickly? I became curious.

The book has a three-decade history. The proceedings of a workshop in AIIMS, New Delhi, conducted in 1986 by the then editor of the *British Medical Journal* and his colleagues were recorded as a booklet titled *Better Medical Writing*. A similar workshop held a year later at KEM Hospital, Mumbai grew into a multi-author book titled *Communication for Biomedical Scientists*. Now, nearly three decades later, 29 authors came together to write the first edition of this book. A limited edition was released by the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* during the first Conference of the World Association of Medical Writers in 2015. The book has gone through a peer-review process and the version that I have in my hands is a revised edition printed in 2016.

In the first five chapters, the book dissects the present format of writing a scientific paper to clarify the anatomy and function of each part, explaining the evolution of the IMRAD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) structure. It distills the wisdom gained by experience, necessary for writing scientific papers, from the 'Introduction' to 'Materials and Methods' to 'Results and Discussion'. The five chapters are tied up neatly with a sixth chapter on the argu-

ment matrix – the key to structuring the content of the paper.

In the next three chapters, the book gives tips for writing abstracts, title keywords, references and even cover letters. The logic and history of the traditions adopted by the journals that publish research in biomedical sciences are explained.

The insights provided in these initial nine chapters are useful even to those who have been publishing papers for the last three decades. Given the advancement and disruption of the scientific publishing industry by digital media, scientists need to build additional skills to keep up. The new software tools that simplify the process of writing papers and reduce the labour, as well as time-tested tips and tricks to improve the quality of a paper, are abundant in the first 105 pages of the book. One could not help thinking that the claim printed on the cover, 'One-stop guide', would be well justified if the book were to deal with only scientific papers.

However, there are other types of publications in the biomedical sciences – letters, editorials, book reviews, case reports, case series, chapters of books and even full books. This book allocates four chapters on writing for fulfilling the needs of researchers to master these forms of writing. The chapters that follow, on the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors for manuscript preparation and on Reporting Guidelines, are highly recommended to readers in the biomedical discipline.

When 29 authors collaborate to produce one book, there is bound to be some variation in the style among the chapters. The 14th chapter on grammar, syntax and style, for example, stands out as the most pleasant to read.

To complete the requirements of being a one-stop guide to most researchers, the book even has chapters on podium presentations and posters. If there were a chapter on designing biomedical illustrations, the remaining requirements of the researchers would also have been satisfied.

Writing is only the first step. In publishing there are issues that need special consideration – authorship and acknowledgements, conflicts of interest, etc. Allocation of chapters to these issues is a testimony to the thoroughness of the book.

There are chapters on the editorial and peer-review processes – I wish the editors of predatory journals, that keep sending e-mails soliciting papers, read the book – on open-access journals and choosing the right journal.

Chapters on electronic publishing, copyright, scientific fraud/misconduct and on redundant publications complete the essential content that any biomedical researcher must know. Though the target group is biomedical researchers, most of the chapters in the book are useful to scientists in other disciplines.

The book is designed reasonably well following the textbook style of the 80s, with boxes, tables, figures, graphs, etc. used where necessary. Since the chapters are short – the longest ones are about 20 pages and the shortest is just four pages – it is easy reading.

Organizing 26 chapters in about 320 pages, covering all relevant areas necessary for biomedical researchers, is no mean task. Here the book fumbles. The flow of ideas between chapters would be smoother if they are rearranged. I had to reorganize the order of the chapters in this review to present a coherent picture of the content to the readers. The other dissatisfaction of this reviewer is related to the typo that remains in spite of the book being a second edition.

The book gives extensive references. Some of these need intensive reading by biomedical researchers. Repeating the most important ones at the end, as links to useful resources, was a masterstroke that makes the book easy to use even after the first read. Making the chapters of this book available individually as PDF files and as a free course on a mobile platform would make access to these links easier and bring even more value to this priceless edition.

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