

Handout: How freelance publication professionals help avoid waste

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Summary

Authors may waste editors' time by submitting material that does not meet journals' content and documentation requirements. Even with good editorial quality control, some peer-reviewed articles are later found to be flawed enough to need retraction. This requires time and work by editors and publishers that could have been saved with better pre-submittal quality control. Retractions also mean that resources used for review and publication have been wasted.

We will show examples from our work to explain how freelance publication professionals (authors' editors, translators, medical writers and others) help reduce waste by educating and training authors in research writing, data reporting and publication ethics. Freelance consultants, especially those who are fluent in the authors' first language and familiar with the authors' research and cultural context, have the flexibility to provide authors with individually-tailored feedback that enables them to improve the readability, accuracy and clarity of their writing and reporting. By facilitating the dissemination of results from non-Anglophone and non-industrialized countries, freelance professionals can ultimately help reduce the waste that results from policy and practice development processes that fail to consider evidence from non-western or resource-limited settings.

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Table 1

Areas in which authors' editors can help researchers to publish with less wastage (Shashok 2014)

1. Choose the journals most likely to be interested in the research and most likely to provide useful feedback
2. Prepare manuscripts and accompanying documents in accordance with the journals' requirements, and navigate the submittal process
3. Optimize publication strategies by understanding publishers' terms and conditions regarding editorial quality, costs of publication, access, rights retained or lost, embargoes, self-archiving and repositories
4. Avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism, self-plagiarism and inaccurate citation
5. Understand their ethical obligations in the publication process
6. Refute unfounded criticisms by reviewers
7. Develop different types of publications for specific audiences and media