

# 25 Tips for Getting Your Manuscript Published

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## Heart Failure Forum

Brano's contributions to publications:

- Published first in the early 1980s
- Came to the Texas Heart Institute in 1984
  - 1984: First THI publications (summary of transplantation at THI and pancreatitis in transplant patients)
  - 1985: First presentations based on THI data (ISHLT and ASAIO)
- More than 250 abstracts submitted and presented at scientific meetings
- More than 300 manuscripts published in books and scientific journals (first published 1982)

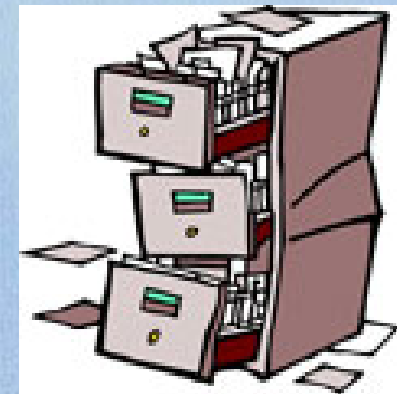


# 25 Publication Tips

1. Pick an important topic (ie, a research question)
2. Target an appropriate journal
  - Appropriateness for your message
  - Type and length of articles published
  - Impact factor (<http://scientific.thomson.com>): NEJM (44.06), Circulation (12.563), Eur Heart J (6.247), J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg (3.73), Ann Thorac Surg (2.244), Eur J Cardiothorac Surg (2.106)
  - Likelihood of publication
  - Journal circulation
3. Follow the journal's instructions (correct spacing, commas before reference numbers): [www.mulford.meduohio.edu/instr](http://www.mulford.meduohio.edu/instr)

# 25 Publication Tips

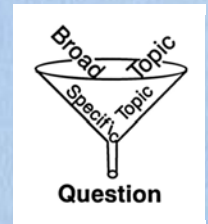
4. Plan your study; think about the best way to answer and defend your research question
5. Get appropriate institutional approvals
6. Review important literature; arrange papers in the order in which you will cite them
  - Buy EndNote Software
7. Write an outline
8. Collaborate with coauthors and a statistician



# 25 Publication Tips

## 9. Write in the IMRAD format

- Introduction: Keep it short (background, gap in literature, research question) (past or present tense)
- Materials and Methods : Include sufficient information for peers to reproduce the study; record data on a table or spreadsheet (past tense)
- Results: Include a result for every method used (past tense)
- Discussion: Answer your research question; discuss the most relevant studies; finish with a conclusion (past or present tense)
- References: Use the most relevant; include those written by possible reviewers
- Figures: A picture is worth a thousand words. Choose figures early ( $\geq 300$  dpi TIF); if necessary, seek permission early



# 25 Publication Tips

10. Follow US plagiarism /copyright laws; do NOT paste parts of published papers into yours, even if you wrote those papers
11. Use a published article as a template (but don't copy it)
12. Make a list of phrases typically used in English language journals (ie, phrases used in the Methods section)
  - “The protocol was approved by the institutional review board, and all patients gave informed consent ...”
  - “The EXCITE study was a double-blind, randomized, parallel design ... designed to compare the efficacy and safety of ...”

# 25 Publication Tips

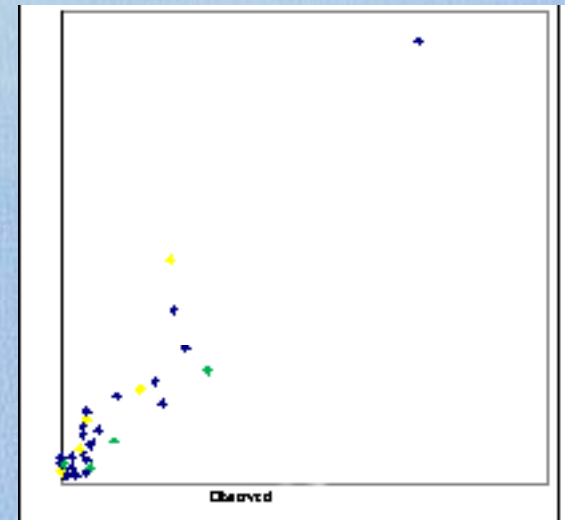
14. Be direct; state the point and then provide supporting details (ie, use topic sentences with supporting sentences for that topic)

“We assessed the mechanisms involved in the beneficial effects of hydralazine on ventricular function in patients who had chronic aortic insufficiency. For this assessment, we performed radionuclide studies of ventricular function in 15 patients **at rest and during treadmill exercise**. All 15 patients had pure aortic insufficiency and were in functional class I or II.”

- Keep a consistent order throughout.

# 25 Publication Tips

15. Focus on content (ie, getting your message across), not small things (eg, where to place an article like “a” or “the”)
16. Include only information readers need
17. Stick to the topic; include one thought per sentence
18. Use key terms  
“Digitalis increases the contractility of the mammalian heart. This increased contractility results from changes in calcium flux through the muscle cell membrane.”
19. Use headers
20. Make tables and figures easy to understand





# 25 Publication Tips

21<sub>a</sub>. Learn English grammar and style rules that make writing clearer

- Where possible, choose verbs that express action
- Try to avoid frequent use of passive verbs and other forms of *to be*  
“We found that...” vs. “It was found that...”
- Avoid empty clauses at the beginning of a sentence (“It is”; “There are”)
- Make the actor the subject of the sentence; place the action in the verb  
“An increase in heart rate occurred.”

**Revision:** “The heart rate increased.”

- Write in first person when feasible
- Use transition words

“Individual residues in the repeated-sequence blocks had diverged.  
Nevertheless, the patterns of amino acids were identical. Therefore,  
we studied...”

# 25 Publication Tips

21<sub>b</sub>. Learn English grammar and style rules that make writing clear

- Use subject-verb-object sentence patterns; keep sentences short (20-25 words); avoid descriptive words (adjectives and adverbs)

“This study produced 4 main findings.”

- Keep the subject and verb close together

“Every step of the procedure, including the criteria for selecting patients, the surgical approach, the intraoperative technique, and the postoperative nursing care, had to be evaluated.”

**Revised:** “We had to evaluate every step of the procedure, including the criteria for selecting patients, the surgical approach, the intraoperative technique, and the postoperative nursing care.”

- Avoid noun strings: “heart failure left ventricular assist device patient”
- Avoid nominalizations—words (nouns) that end in *tion, ment, ance, er, or, ent, ity, sion, ness, ance, ence*, etc (assessment, measurement)

# 25 Publication Tips

## 22. Study English

- Buy a style manual (AMA, Chicago)
- Buy Stedman's Spellchecker software
- Use the Web

[www.authoraid.info](http://www.authoraid.info) (free site for non-native English speakers publishing in the biomedical sciences; includes presentations and blogs on writing and publishing scientific papers, review articles, case reports, ethics, grammar, and more)

[www.refdesk.com](http://www.refdesk.com) (links to a variety of sites)

[www.bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com) (*American Heritage Book of English Usage*)

[www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl](http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl) (writing tools, exercises, and resources)

[www.education.yahoo.com/reference/thesaurus](http://www.education.yahoo.com/reference/thesaurus) (thesaurus)

[www.online-medical-dictionary.org](http://www.online-medical-dictionary.org) (medical dictionary)

[www.smartny.com/controlledenglish.htm](http://www.smartny.com/controlledenglish.htm) (controlled-terms dictionary and translator)

# 25 Publication Tips

## 23. Hire a GOOD English-speaking editor

- AMWA or BELS certified

Sources for editors: American Medical Writers Association, Board of Editors in the Life Sciences, Council of Science Editors, European Association of Science Editors

## 24. Have a colleague with good English skills read your manuscript

# 25 Publication Tips

25. Don't be frustrated by rejection or revision requests; acceptance without revision is rare
- Reply quickly to queries from the journal; meet revision deadlines

In science, the credit goes to the man who convinces the world, not to the man to whom the idea first occurs.

— Sir Francis Darwin

# Thank You!

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<http://www.texasheart.org/AboutUs/Depart/scipub.cfm>:

Checklist for Writing a Biomedical Paper

Organizing the Biomedical Paper

EndNote Quick Reference Guide

Writing Case Reports for Publication

Writing a Scientific Manuscript

Tips for Writing a Meeting Abstract

Pre-publication Worksheet for Observational Studies and Clinical Trials

Pre-publication Worksheet for Basic Science Studies

Guidance for Completing Clinical Protocols

