

Letter to the Editor: A Writing Review

S M Yasir Arafat^{1,2,3*}

¹Department of Psychiatry, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

²Department of Public Health, ASA University, Bangladesh

³AIMS Lab, United International University (UIU), Dhaka, Bangladesh

***Corresponding Author:** S M Yasir Arafat, Department of Psychiatry, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Received: August 31, 2016; **Published:** September 01, 2016

Introduction

The ability to critically analyze manuscripts is equally as important as carrying out research and conducting a critical evaluation of the literature, in the form of a letter is a challenge which should be encouraged and awarded more recognition than it currently attracts [1]. Many biomedical journals contain Letter to the Editor section and Letters to The Editor continue to be a vital part of *The Journal's* interaction with its readers [2-5]. It is generally a short form of communication, and it can be written on topics which attract the attention of the readers [1-6]. It was aimed at describing briefly the letter to editor in regards to what it is and how it can be prepared.

Considerations during writing letter to the editor

Considerations during writing letter to the editor
Clear understandable message [2,3]
Adjustable with the journal's format [2,3]
Specific objectives with constructive comments [2, 3]
Brief, and concise [2, 3]
Should be courteous [2]
Having specific comments [2]
Based on evidences [2]
Avoiding the repetition topics of the original article [2]
Presentation of additional data [2]

Table 1: Important consideration while writing a letter to the editor.

While preparing a letter to a journal, few points should be answered such as, what is the purpose of your letter? Is the format of your letter suitable to the format of the journal? Is your subject matter really worth mentioning? [2,3].

Purpose of Letter to the Editor

Purposes of a letter to the Editor
Commenting on previously published articles [3]
Brief scientific or clinical communication [3]
Floating of a new hypothesis [3]
Drawing the reader's attention to important new hazards relevant to clinical practice [3]
Commenting on the nature or format of the journal [3]

Table 2: Purposes of writing letter to the editor.

Problematic issues in letters to the editor
Irrelevant comments on the published topic [2,3]
Reiteration of the points indicated in the original article [2,3]
General comments [2,3]
Ambiguous message [2,3]
Unnecessarily long letter [2,3]
Lack of any new information [2,3]
Too many figures or tables [2,3]
Too many references [2,3]
Use of aggressive or scornful language [2,3]
Biased comments [2,3]
Comments on personality or competency of other authors [2,3]
Use of rough, vulgar, pedantic, and pejorative expressions [2]

Table 3: Problems should avoided during writing letter to the editor.

Pattern of letter to the editor

The most common pattern of writing a letter to the editor is to comment on a published article as well as the interpretations should be objective, brief and constructive [1-6]. There are also letters regarding research reports, case reports, case series or an adverse reaction to a drug and those can be published as a letter [1-4]. Most of the journals evaluate letters as other manuscripts and submission of a letter resemble to those required for manuscripts [2]. Editors of the journals usually expect to receive brief, clear, comprehensible letters, with certain limits (i.e. letters \leq 600 words; number of references \leq 5; figures or tables none or \leq 2, and authors \leq 5) [2,5,7]. The format of letters to the Editor varies among different journals, it is useful to carefully follow the target journal's Instructions to Authors to see if that particular journal accepts letters and how they should be prepared [3]. Authors may have a look at recent letters of the journal to get an idea of the type, scope and style of published letters [3]. Letter to the editor should be addressed and directed to the Editor of the journal, and not to the author [3]. Letter writers should aim to go straight to the point, omitting unnecessary description or detail. It is better to state each point separately, as it is much easier for the editor, reviewer and the reader to appreciate the points made [3]. It is a good opportunity for novice authors to publish as well as to cut their teeth and to participate in the scholarly debate [8].

Conclusion

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommends that peer-reviewed journals publish letters to the editor [1]. Letters should contain objective, precise, clear, brief, and constructive discussions on evidences [2,8].

Conflict of interest: Having no conflict of interest.

Contribution: Author had the sole contribution in every step of the study.

Funding: It was a self-funded study.

Bibliography

1. Tierney E., *et al.* "What is the role of 'the letter to the editor'?" *European Archives of Oto-Rhino-Laryngology* 272.9 (2015): 2089-2093.
2. Suer E and Yaman O. "How to write an editorial letter?" *Turkish Journal of Urology* 39 (Suppl 1) (2013): 41-43.
3. Peh WCG and Ng KH. "Writing a letter to the Editor". *Singapore Medical Journal* 51.7 (2010): 532-535.

4. Pradas JR and Navarro ML. "Frequency and characteristics of letters to the editor published in *Farmacia Hospitalaria* (1995-2006)". *Farmacia Hospitalaria* 31.3 (2007): 156-160.
5. Poss R and Heckman JD. "Letters to The Editor: A Change in Policy". *Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery* (2004).
6. Kastner M., *et al.* "What do letters to the editor publish about randomized controlled trials? A cross-sectional study". *BMC Research Notes* 6 (2013): 414.
7. Gyles C. "Letters to the Editor". *CVJ* 54 (2013): 527-528.
8. Anstey A. "Letters to the editor: time for more scholarly debate". *British Association of Dermatologists* 171.1 (2014): 1-2.

Volume 1 Issue 3 September 2016

© All rights reserved by S M Yasir Arafat.