

CHAPTER 5

DECIDING ON A TARGET JOURNAL

So Many Choices: What to Consider

One of the most important decisions that each author must face involves selection of the optimal journal for publishing their research results. While this may, on the surface, appear to be a relatively straightforward decision, there are many potential factors that need to be considered. We expect that many authors will have a preliminary idea of exactly which journal/journals they would like to target for manuscript submission, based largely upon the journals that publish manuscripts relevant to their research, and their perception of the relative prestige and importance of those journals.

While these are certainly important factors to consider, they should not be the only factors that influence this important decision. Other factors to consider include the likelihood that potentially-relevant readers will be able to find the published article, the average acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted to the journal, the actual "turn-around" time for receiving the initial review of the submitted manuscript, time for potential proposed revisions and for re-evaluation, and the time interval between acceptance of the manuscript and its appearance in publication format (both electronically and in hard copy). As will be discussed in the following paragraphs, careful consideration of each of these factors can help to ensure that an author will be maximally successful in the publication enterprise.

A review of Ulrich's periodical database revealed that there are currently over 13,000 biomedical journals (Mongeon, P. and Paul-Hus, A. 2016. *Scientometrics* 106:213-228). The publishers of Med BioWorld have identified a comparable number of biomedical journals, and 5,160 of these are included in the relatively-selective MedLine database. These journals represent hundreds of medical/scientific disciplines, and the scope of these journals range from those with broad general appeal to others that are very highly specialized. As a consequence, while it is probable that an author may have one or two specific journals in mind in which they would like to publish, it may be valuable to explore alternative options. In this regard, for example, an investigator in the field of virology might be predisposed to consider publishing a relatively-specialized research article in the *Journal of Virology* or *Virology*. However, possible alternative specialty journal options include the *Journal of General Virology*, the *Journal of Medical Virology*, *Intervirology*, *Herpes*, *Virus Genes*, or the *Journal of Virological Methods*, among many others. The point is that there are a relatively large number of options that could/should be considered for the publication of any original piece of research in a given field.

Measures of Journal Quality

As indicated above, initial thoughts about potential target journals for manuscript submission are often based on the author's, and their peer-group's, perception of the relative prestige and importance of those journals. Two relatively-common metrics exist for measuring Journal Quality; they are: Impact Factor, and Eigenfactor. Despite the relative popularity in the use of these metrics, recent concerns have been