

Guidelines Take Guesswork Out of *Radiology* Submission

FROM THE format of the title page to the type of information that should be included in the appendix, manuscript submission guidelines for RSNA's peer-reviewed science journal, *Radiology*, help authors seeking to share their research with the world.

"We want to publish the best of the submissions we receive regarding original hypothesis-driven research," said *Radiology* Editor Anthony V. Proto, M.D. "Authors should take the time and effort to make sure that the science in their study is not clouded by problems over which the authors have control."

Avoiding those problems is easy if authors follow the *Radiology* guidelines for preparation and submission of manuscripts, said Dr. Proto. The guidelines cover every aspect of the process, including the type of information that should be included in each section of the manuscript, conflicts of interest, redundant publication, manuscript categorization terms, authorship and clinical trial registration. Authors seeking to publish their research in *Radiology* can find detailed guidelines at RSNA.org/publications/rad/pdf/pia.pdf.

"Authors should pay careful attention to our guidelines regarding authorship and meeting the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) criteria for authorship," Dr. Proto advised. Authorship guidelines clarify contributions that should be made by all authors, so as to decide whether a participant should be listed as an author.

"Also, we urge authors to pay careful attention to required statements in the manuscript regarding institutional review board approval, informed consent and HIPAA compliance for prospective or retrospective studies,



Anthony V. Proto, M.D.
Radiology Editor

and similarly appropriate approval by an animal care and use committee for studies involving animals," Dr. Proto continued. "These are issues of human and animal rights."

Manuscript Central Eases Process

Since 2002, *Radiology* has used Manuscript Central, an online process for manuscript submission and peer review. Authors begin

by submitting their manuscripts at RSNA.org/radiologyjnl/submit.

"The instructions on how to submit through Manuscript Central are fairly specific," said Dr. Proto. "But if authors have difficulty in going through some of the steps, they certainly can feel free to call the *Radiology* editorial office. Our staff is available to speak with them and help them get through the process."

One of the most important parts of the manuscript submission and review



Herbert Y. Kressel, M.D.
Radiology Editor-designate

process is the "blinding" of any information that may reveal the origin of the manuscript, said Dr. Proto, including the institution name, author initials and

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author name mentioned in the text. Blinding is essential to the journal's double-blind peer-review system, he explained.

"The reviewers like the double-blind system because they feel they can be as straightforward and open and frank as possi-

ble, because they know that the authors are not going to know who reviewed their manuscripts," said Dr. Proto.

"Similarly, the authors like the system because they know the reviewers do not know who the authors are and the potential for bias is removed."

If essential items are missing after a manuscript is submitted, the corresponding author is asked to send them. Manuscript categorization terms are then used to generate a list of potential reviewers. Reviewers provide a short

summary of what was done and what was found in the study. They also list the study's major strengths and weaknesses, in addition to indicating if information designated for the Advances in Knowledge and Implications for Patient Care sections is appropriate. The reviewers also offer specific comments on each part of the study.

Once all reviews are received, the manuscript is evaluated by the journal editor, who makes a decision of acceptance or rejection. The average time to first decision on a manuscript is 34 days.

Clarifying Purpose is Important

Herbert Y. Kressel, M.D., of the Department of Radiology at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, will succeed Dr. Proto as editor of *Radiology* in January 2008. As he prepares for his new responsibilities, Dr. Kressel has a few suggestions for new authors planning to submit manuscripts to the journal.

"My experience has been that authors really need to pay a lot of attention to the purpose of their paper, and make sure they're clear in their own mind as to what the purpose is," he said.

Dr. Kressel said authors must not only ensure that the statement of purpose is very clear, but also that the purpose is the basis for the rest of the paper and that the methods relate to the purpose. The methods should be described in sufficient detail, so that an informed reader could replicate the study, he said.

"With regard to the way that data have been collected, authors need to pay attention to any bias in case selection on a clinical paper, or lack of controls on a more basic science paper," Dr. Kressel said. "If there is a bias in the data, does it limit the utility of the observations in providing new knowledge?"

Dr. Kressel said distinctness and clarity are important in the results section and that the results should directly relate to the original purpose of the study. Brevity is important in the discussion section, he said.



Published regularly since 1923, *Radiology* has long been recognized as an authoritative reference for current, clinically relevant and high quality research. Each month the journal publishes approximately 300 pages of peer-reviewed original research, reviews, commentary and opinion. With circulation of more than 35,000, *Radiology* has the largest readership of any journal in the field. *Radiology* has the highest impact factor among general diagnostic imaging journals, according to the 2006 Citations Reports®.

"People tend to want to include a lot of information in the discussion that may not really be pertinent," Dr. Kressel said. "I think it's important to avoid the pitfall of being speculative in the discussion."

Consistency is Key

Dr. Proto urged authors to ensure consistency among the various sections of the manuscript. For example, numbers given in one section should agree with the numbers in another section.

"An author who submits a manuscript that demonstrates internal inconsistencies, lack of clarity and lack of focus can portray to the reviewers that maybe he or she is not that interested in

publishing the manuscript in the journal," Dr. Proto said.

Dr. Proto recommended that authors, particularly inexperienced ones, give a manuscript to a respected colleague who does not know about the study, before submitting the manuscript to the journal.

"Ask the colleague, 'What's not clear? Are you able to reproduce the study from what I say in this manuscript?'" Dr. Proto said. "Sometimes authors don't realize that they haven't explained something well enough, simply because they understand the details that they have not included in the manuscript." □

RSNA Journals at RSNA 2007

Learn more about RSNA's peer-reviewed journals at RSNA 2007. *Radiology* Editor Anthony V. Proto, M.D., and *RadioGraphics* Editor William W. Olmsted, M.D., will lead



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a refresher course, "Reviewing Manuscripts for the RSNA Journals." The course is sponsored by the RSNA Publications Council.

RSNA Board Liaison for Publications and Communications Hedvig Hricak, M.D., Ph.D., will moderate an RSNA 2007 special focus session, "Imaging Journals: Peering

into the Past, Present and Future." Speakers will be Albert L. Baert, M.D., Ph.D., Adrian K. Dixon, M.D., Herbert Y. Kressel, M.D., William W. Olmsted, M.D., Anthony V. Proto, M.D., and Robert J. Stanley, M.D.

Visit the Publications kiosk in the RSNA Services area at RSNA 2007 for a guided tour of *Radiology* and *RadioGraphics* online.

For more information and to register for courses, visit RSNA2007.RSNA.org.