To publish an editorial – the Editor in Chief’s perspective

Daniela Fodor

2nd Internal Medicine Department, “Iuliu Hatieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

As the Editor-in-Chief of Medical Ultrasonography, one of the foremost challenges I encounter pertains to the selection of authors for writing an Editorial in each issue.

In fact, what is an Editorial? And is the Editorial that important?

An Editorial is a brief paper of 600-1,000 words that appears generally in the opening of a new issue in the journal. The first title found in the table of contents and the first paper appearing when you open a medical journal is the Editorial. So, we can say that it is the visiting card of the journal.

In the capacity of the Editor-in-Chief, the task of selecting both the topic and the invited contributor for an Editorial is a nuanced endeavor. However, it is imperative to underscore that adherence to a rigid sequence in this process is not obligatory. In cases where an article featuring novel and exceptionally captivating findings is accepted for publication in an upcoming issue, it may be prudent to extend an invitation to an established authority in the corresponding field. This invitation would be extended with the intention of soliciting a commentary that pertains to the subject matter or to enable them to impart their expert insights, sentiments, or personal experiences to our readership.

In top quality journals, you can find excellent Editorials and their messages are of great impact for readers. An informed opinion expressed in an Editorial can sometimes make the difference between a read and no-read paper.

If the invitation for writing an Editorial will be addressed to someone who you personally know, who already published in your journal, or maybe is in the journal’s editorial team, the chance for an affirmative and positive answer is usually higher. Of course, the method of extending the invitation and establishing the manuscript submission deadline holds significant importance! But what happens when you invite a personality in the field who maybe did not even hear about your journal? I addressed during time such invitations, but the answers were mainly negative (sometimes I did not receive any answer). The resolution to this challenge is unequivocal – increasing the quality of Medical Ultrasonography and enhancing its prominence and visibility, thereby establishing it as a preferred journal for publication.

However, what about instances when my grasp of the forthcoming Editorial’s subject matter is limited or entirely absent? In such circumstances, I found invaluable assistance from several of our collaborators who generously contributed their own ideas, proving to be a lifeline in the editorial process.

For this reason, I decided to perform a PubMed search to find the answer for the question “How to write an Editorial?” thinking that I obviously still have a lot to learn about this subject and in this way, I will be able to manage better in the future.

I was surprised to find scarce data. I found only two papers, the first published in 1976 [1] and the second in 1992 [2], strictly related to my question. I read them with pleasure and found interesting information that are still valid today; hence, I decided to share them with you.

Charles G. Roland, senior editor at JAMA between 1964-1969, cited the 10 “tangential items” published by Davidson in 1957 [3] and added the 11th item as suitable editorial themes: historical material; public relation; legislation and government activities, economic considerations, ethics and morality; professional organizational matters, relations and related groups; semantic and terminological problems; philosophical excursions; research and training; and critical commentary on scientific articles or books [1]. I highly regard the recommendation that emphasizes that “You should be able to state...
the message of your editorial in one sentence” and the insight on the significance of the opening sentence has been particularly enlightening [1].

Laurel Archer Copp, editor during the 90s in the Journal of Professional Nursing, wrote about the approaches that an editor takes from time to time [2]. Apart from some points that need to be considered during writing Editorials, I appreciate the notion that “a little humor is correct” when writing an Editorial.

While my initial problem remains unresolved, it is undeniable that I have obtained valuable insights from these two papers. Nobody will teach you how to be an Editor in Chief for a small or medium medical journal (especially that, to be an Editor in Chief, it is usually a second or third job for you, generally *pro bono*). Hence, I would enthusiastically welcome the opportunity for highly experienced Editors affiliated with “prestigious journals” to share their invaluable insights and expertise, potentially through writing an editorial!

**References**