publication of scientific work

The scholarly publishing industry is huge and there are thousands of journals for researchers to choose from. However, given the scary high rejection rates of submission in peer-reviewed journals and the 6–12 months time taken to get published, how do you know which journal is your best bet?

Here are a few steps that you can take to significantly improve your chances of getting published:

1. Browse legit journals

As of 2015, the academic publishing market had an annual revenue of $20.5 Billion. This revenue has grown tremendously over the last two years. Consequently, this growth has given rise to a large number of predatory publishers who try to scam early-career researchers in return for getting their research published. Unfamiliar with the process of research publishing and attracted by the prospect of getting published sooner than thought, early- career researchers often fall prey to these publishers.

You can take a few measures to avoid getting scammed by these predatory journals:

Stay wary of unsolicited calls /emails — Reputable publishers don't make cold calls or send unsolicited emails seeking submissions. It is mainly scammers who get access researchers' details via Google Scholar, Academia.edu etc. and then do cold reach-outs.

Use Jeffrey Beall's list : Jeffrey Beall built this list of predatory journals and publishers. If you find a publisher suspicious, check if their name appears on this list. If it does, be sure that you're being mugged. Hence, stay away.

Non-indexed journals: PubMed, JSTOR, SCOPUS, SHERPA, and DOJA (Directory of Open Journal Access) are some of the popular databases of authentic journals. If you are unsure about a publisher's authenticity, check if their journal is listed on these databases

2. Choose the best-fit journal

Allaying your fears of being scammed by a predatory publisher is just step one towards getting your research published. The real test of your efforts starts at submission, when your paper is reviewed. This is the stage where most papers are rejected for not complying to a journals' formatting guidelines. Each journal has its own formatting, styling and referencing guidelines. Failing to comply with these leads to rejection.

One common mistake that early-career researchers make is that they write a paper first and then decide the journal to get published in. Another mistake they make is to aim for the highest-ranked journal in their field for publication. This naturally increases the chances of rejection for first-timers.

Quality and reputation of journals matter. However, credibility of journals and getting accepted faster is of prime importance.

So a much better approach is to:

Write a list of journals in the area of your research. You can use your university's library search or the internet to find the journals.

Once the list is ready, reorganize it according to the journals' relevance and quality.

3. Understand the submission process

As mentioned earlier, not complying with the guidelines of a journal is one of the most common reasons why research papers get rejected. Once you have decided the journal you want to publish in, visit the journal's website and read through their guidelines. Almost all journals have a different submission process.

The guidelines of each journal tend to vary across the following details:

Minimum and maximum length of the article

Referencing

Formatting (includes space, font, margin, headings etc)

British (or Australian)/American English

Choice of medium −electronic, hard copy, or both

4. Write a convincing journal cover letter

The role of a cover letter is to convince an editor that your research work is worth publishing in their journal. Hence, it is highly important that you write the letter with as much sincerity as you would write your manuscript text.

Here are some tips that you can use while writing the cover letter for your journal submission:

If possible, find out the name of the editor and address her by name. You can find out the name of the editor through the journal's online submission system. This information is generally public.

In the first and the second paragraph of the cover letter state the name of your manuscript, include the names of the author/s, describe the reason behind your interest in the research work you have done, and the major findings from your research. Additionally, you can refer to prior work or the previous articles that you have published.

In the next paragraph, address the aim and scope of the journal. Write how your work contributes to the aim of the journal and falls within the scope of their scientific coverage. Also

mention why your work would be valuable for their readers.