

FEATURE



CHRISTMAS 2015: THE PUBLICATION GAME

Rejection of rejection: a novel approach to overcoming barriers to publication

Tired of rejections? **Cath Chapman** and **Tim Slade** offer a simple way to fight back

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All academics aim to publish in high impact journals. However, many leading scientific and medical journals reject more than 80% of the manuscripts they receive, making rejection the biggest barrier to publication in high quality journals. We propose a novel solution to this problem. It involves very little extra work by submitting authors, is applicable to a wide range of circumstances (such as flawed study, lack of broad interest to the field, or highly critical assessors), and is scaleable to meet the needs of academics from various disciplines. To be submitted on receipt of a manuscript rejection, the rejection of rejection letter (box) aims to significantly improve the publication rates of participating academics by overcoming the leading barrier to publication—manuscript rejection. An electronic copy of the letter is available from the authors on request.

Competing interests: Both authors have read and understood BMJ policy on declaration of interests and declare that they have no competing interests. Although they have received several rejections from prestigious medical journals, at the time of writing they had not been rejected by *The BMJ*. Should this occur they will no doubt use the strategy outlined here.

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Rejection of rejection letter

[insert university emblem here]

Dear Professor [insert name of editor]

[Re: MS 2015_XXXX Insert title of ground-breaking study here]

Thank you for your rejection of the above manuscript.

Unfortunately we are not able to accept it at this time. As you are probably aware we receive many rejections each year and are simply not able to accept them all. In fact, with increasing pressure on citation rates and fiercely competitive funding structures we typically accept fewer than 30% of the rejections we receive. Please don't take this as a reflection of your work. The standard of some of the rejections we receive is very high.

In terms of the specific factors influencing our decision the failure by Assessor 1 to realise the brilliance of the study was certainly one of them. Simply stating "this study is neither novel nor interesting and does not extend knowledge in this area" is not reason enough. This, coupled with the use of Latin quotes by Assessor 2, rendered an acceptance of your rejection extremely unlikely.

We do wish you and your editorial team every success with your rejections in the future and hope they find safe harbour elsewhere. To this end, may we suggest you send one to [insert name of rival research group] for consideration. They accept rejections from some very influential journals.

Please understand that our decision regarding your rejection is final. We have uploaded the final manuscript in its original form, along with the signed copyright transfer form.

We look forward to receiving the proofs and to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely

Dr [insert name here]

[Insert research group acronym here]

[Insert university here]

[Insert country here—that is, Australia/New Zealand/small European Country/Canada]