

Evolving Medical Literature

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Scientific writing and publication have always been perceived to include mainly an original research article or case report; the latter considered as the oldest form of scientific communication and the lowest in terms of hierarchy in the level of evidence in medical literature. Original research articles have evolved in so many forms, depending on the conduct of scientific investigation and the statistical analysis performed. The level of hierarchy has also changed to include systematic review and meta-analysis, all of these generally follow the format of an original article – IMRAD (Introduction, Methodology, Results and Discussion).

Professor Jose Lapena, Jr. in his usual introduction to the medical writing workshops conducted by the Philippine Medical Journal Editors (PAMJE) would point to the presence and importance of other articles which can be considered for publication in a scientific journal. Foremost among his examples is the groundbreaking discovery of the DNA double helix, widely attributed to the seminal article by Watson and Crick published in *Nature* in 1953. The article in fact is not an original research article, but rather a one-page letter to the Editor or commentary; the article was prefaced with the statement “We wish to suggest a structure for the salt of deoxyribose nucleic acid (D.N.A.).”¹

Needless to say, that even during olden times scientific journals have considered for publication other types of articles which include review article, technical note, commentary, letter to the editor, invited editorial to name a few. Nowadays, online publication also includes pictorial and video which is used more for visual technical essay. *New England Journal of Medicine* (NEJM) for example, one of the oldest scientific journals still in existent now include in their online publication “Images in Clinical Medicine” and “Videos in Clinical Medicine.”² *British Medical Journal* (BMJ) which maintains both print and online network of journals lists in its website numerous types of other articles it consider for publication to name a few: Clinical Updates, Practice Pointers, Essentials, State of the Art Reviews, Minerva pictures etc.³

Online publication has also evolve in the way it delivers these scientific information from the traditional text-based journal to now include audio as well, like the podcast offered by JAMA Network (*Journal of American Medical Association*).⁴ It must be worth mentioning that medical writing and publication has indeed evolved with so many avenues now available to get published and in so many forms medical literature is being circulated.

One good example that is included in this issue is the review article on “Mutations and other biomarkers in non-small cell lung carcinoma with implications in the Philippine Setting.” Review article must be distinguished from systematic review. “Systematic review is a rigorous way of summarizing the available scientific evidence that is derived from several clinical trials on a particular treatment or method. It uses a methodology of clearly designed questions and methods to identify and critically evaluate relevant research, followed by the collection and analysis of data from the studies that are included in the review.”⁵

Review articles on the other hand are “detailed and comprehensive narrative analysis of recent or evolving developments in a specific topic.”⁵ Unlike the other articles, it does not follow the general format of IMRAD, but Just like the other type of articles it should follow the guidelines of the journal in terms of the structure, number of words, references etc.

The review article of Dr. Tanchuco fits this type of article exemplary. It was exhaustive and comprehensive and would be a good starting point and reference for those who might be interested to dwell more on the evolving molecular pathways and biomarkers in the diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer whether in research or clinical application.

Philippine Journal of Internal Medicine (PJIM) welcome and encourages PCP members to continue submitting this type of articles, especially those topics that involves multi-discipline. This would be of big help to other members who might not have the ready access to wide range of medical literature sources.

References

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