Why Are Manuscripts Rejected after Submission to *Folia Phoniatria et Logopaedica*?

From November 2011 through November 2012, *Folia Phoniatria et Logopaedica* (FPL) received 83 submissions. The 83 submissions included manuscripts from a single special issue on aphasia, published as issue No. 4 of the 2012 volume, as well as several invited review papers. Of these 83 submissions, 49 were rejected following initial editorial action or a full round of reviews.

A rejection rate of 59% (49/83) is not inconsistent with other high-quality journals in fields such as ours (see [1]). Another way to view the need to establish a relatively high threshold for manuscript acceptability is to consider the number of papers typically published in FPL in a given volume. With roughly 7 papers published per issue and 6 issues per volume, we estimate a total of no more than 40 published papers per year in FPL. A lower threshold for acceptance would result in longer publication lags for accepted papers, a situation we are not only working hard to avoid but in fact to move in the opposite direction – shorter times from acceptance to on-line publication (see [2]).

Those are the statistics, but the content of rejection decisions is much more important. I offer here a short list of the more common reasons for rejection of manuscripts by the editorial staff of FPL. I compiled these reasons by reviewing Associate Editor and reviewer comments, as well as my own reviews, of the 49 manuscripts rejected during the November 2011 to November 2012 period. Hopefully, this very brief summary will be useful to authors considering submission of manuscripts to FPL.

(1) *Lack of a Purpose Statement.* Many rejected papers either did not state an explicit purpose, or offered a purpose statement that did not follow from the introductory material.

(2) *Absence of a Control Group.* Many rejected papers had a patient group, applied a condition or treatment to the group and attributed observed changes to the condition or treatment when, in the absence of a control group, other factors (such as familiarity with the task) can be considered competing explanations for observed effects.

(3) *Incompletely Described Methods.* The page limit for manuscripts submitted to FPL places some constraints on descriptions of methods. An extremely involved procedure, for example, may be difficult to contain within the page limit when combined with adequate Introduction, Results, and Discussion sections. Yet, some manuscripts were rejected because the description of methods omitted critical aspects of data collection, experimental conditions, and/or an analysis strategy.

(4) *Description without Organization or Motivation.* There are varying opinions concerning the value of descriptive work (as compared to experimental manipulations) in contemporary science, but students of knowledge progress in our field are aware of the tremendous contribution of careful descriptive work to our understanding of speech, language, and hearing disorders. Descriptive work, however, must be motivated explicitly and carefully, with precise explanations of how the resulting data add to the knowledge base and why the addition

makes a difference. Papers were rejected for publication in *FPL* because they offered a descriptive account of certain measures without motivating their selection, and/or because a sound argument was not offered for why such data add to the knowledge base or serve a heuristic function of suggesting interesting experimental manipulations.

Other reasons for rejection of papers can be found in the reviews of these 49 submissions, but the four general issues outlined above are the recurring themes across this set of negative decisions. Of course, an editorial staff

can always ask for a revision of any manuscript – for example, the absence of a purpose statement can always be ‘fixed’ – but some threshold for requesting a revised manuscript must be imposed [2].

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References

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