

Disseminating your ideas: A conversation with the editors of *Families, Systems, & Health*

Writing Resources

Here are two excellent books that can help you improve your writing:

- *If You Want to Write* by Brenda Ueland
- *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser

In addition, we invite you to participate in this workshop again in future years. We anticipate the learning will be iterative and will benefit from developing a community of practice.

Insider Perspective on Peer Review at FSH

Here are the instructions that the peer reviewers receive once they agree to review:

The purpose of peer review of manuscripts submitted to *Families, Systems, and Health* is to provide honest commentary on the quality and originality of a paper and the paper's interest to the readership of *Families, Systems, and Health*.

All papers submitted to *Families, Systems, and Health* are confidential. Please do not distribute manuscripts nor discuss with anyone during the review process. Reviews are single blinded, meaning the reviewer has access to all author names and the authors do not know the reviewer identity.

We expect clear and concise writing in each section of every manuscript so as to be understandable to a general audience.

Here are some general tips we have found helpful:

- Provide a brief summary statement of the content of the manuscript.
- Focus your review comments primarily to authors.
- Use a professional, constructive tone.
- Be honest and kind.
- Provide your overall opinion of the paper. Don't recommend for or against publication in comments to the author; you may share your recommendations in comments to the editor.
- Identify your concerns clearly and be sure they are consistent with your recommendations.
- Include specific suggestions for how the paper/research could be improved.
- Include comments on the "quality of writing" with examples of concerns.
- Keep in mind journal/section focus; the editor's concern is the readership.

We request that reviewers comment on the adequacy of each section of the paper they review, with some guiding questions as follows:

Title—Does the title adequately and concisely capture the content of the paper?

Abstract—Does the abstract concisely and accurately provide a distillation of the main points of the paper?

Introduction—Do the authors provide a concise review of the relevant literature to date, with up to date references from primary sources cited? Is there an adequate “gap” statement? Is the concept of the paper unique and relevant?

Methods—Are the methods rigorous and appropriate to the topic of inquiry? Is there an appropriate human subjects protection statement? Are the methods described appropriately? Is there a need for specialized statistical review? Is the sample size appropriate? Are the statistical analyses appropriate for the study design? For systematic reviews of the literature, do the authors describe a reproducible strategy to conduct a thorough search of appropriate databases, and did they describe explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria related to selection of the primary studies?

Results—Are the relevant demographics described adequately? Do the results follow logically from the stated reason to do the project? Are the results clear and focused? Are tables and figures used appropriately to illustrate findings without being more than minimally redundant with the text?

Discussion— Do the results have clinical, educational, or system design value and to what extent are they generalizable? Does the discussion include implications for clinical or educational practice? Are the noted limitations that are accurate, plausible and comprehensive?

For conceptual papers, do the authors include a thorough literature review, and does the model advance the literature and potentially enhance clinical practice?

Finally, trust your experience and instincts. If you have some concerns or confusion, try to name it. If you have ideas about how the authors can recast their submission to better meet the needs of our readers, share them. Peer review is not only about criticism. There is always room to compliment authors, as well.