

GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

Occupational Health Southern Africa

(revised 13 November 2015)

Occupational Health Southern Africa is the official journal of the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM), the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN), the Southern African Institute of Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) and the Mine Medical Professionals' Association (MMPA). It is accredited by the South African Department of Higher Education and listed on African Index Medicus. Appropriate articles of academic merit are accepted for publication, subject to the guidelines set out below.

The journal adheres to the guidelines of the following organisations: the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (<http://publicationethics.org/>), and the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (<http://www.doh.gov.za/nhrec/>).

Review process

All manuscripts (except correspondence) are sent for peer-review, unless they do not comply with the **Guidelines for authors**, or are not relevant for the journal. The review is blinded, meaning that neither the referees nor the authors are informed of each other's' identities. Authors are informed of the outcome of the review process by the Editor.

Ethics

In accordance with stipulations of COPE (<http://publicationethics.org/>) and the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (<http://www.doh.gov.za/nhrec/>), ***the journal requires evidence of ethical approval of all research studies involving human subjects or animals, by an accredited research ethics committee before an article can be published.***

Authorship, factual accuracy and copyright

Authors are solely responsible for the factual accuracy of their work and must ensure that their work does not infringe copyright. Submission of the completed **Statement of acceptance of conditions and responsibilities pertaining to the publication of a manuscript** (available at <http://www.occhealth.org.za>) by all authors is required prior to the review of the manuscript. All and only the legitimate authors must be listed.

The journal subscribes to the criteria for authorship of research articles, developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>). In order to be acknowledged as an author, individuals must have satisfied the following three criteria:

1. Substantial contributions to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
2. drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and
3. final approval of the version to be published.

“Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship.”

Medical writer

The use of a medical writer must be acknowledged. Both the corresponding author and the medical writer must provide a signed declaration agreeing to the inclusion of the medical writer's name in the acknowledgements section at the end of the paper.

Statement of acceptance

Before the paper can be sent for review, all the authors are required to acknowledge and agree to the following conditions pertaining to ethical issues related to the publication of a paper (see the **Statement of acceptance of conditions and responsibilities pertaining to the publication of a manuscript**).

1. Authors are required to declare any potential conflict of interest. These can include financial or personal relationships in the form of dual commitments, competing interests or competing loyalties (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>).
2. Authors are advised that it is their responsibility to determine whether agreement is required from any parties for the use of material in their article, and to ensure that such permission is obtained, so that copyright is not infringed.
3. Authors are required to give the assurance that the content of the manuscript is their own work and, where it is not, that appropriate acknowledgement is given.
4. Authors are responsible for ensuring that statistical analyses contained within the manuscript have been checked for appropriateness and accuracy by a person with a sound knowledge of statistics.
5. Authors must inform the Editor of the existence of any other papers that they have submitted to, or had published by, other journals, or that are in the public domain, and that overlap with this manuscript. Copies of such papers must be supplied to the Editor.
6. The publishers, editors, SASOHN, SASOM, SAIOH and MMPA are not liable for any damages or loss incurred as a result of any statement contained in this publication. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy of this publication, neither the publishers, editors, SASOHN, SASOM, SAIOH or MMPA accept any responsibility for the errors or omissions in the content and reserve the right to edit all contributions. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the publishers, editors, SASOHN, SASOM, SAIOH or MMPA, neither do these societies, publishers or editors endorse or guarantee the products advertised or claims made by the manufacturers.
7. Copyright assignment: Once a paper is accepted for publication, the exclusive copyright of the paper is assigned to the journal. Material from the paper may subsequently be used by the authors, provided that the wording is different.

Requirements and format for submission of a manuscript

In addition to complying with the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>), all articles should conform to the style requirements for publication in the journal, which are indicated hereafter.

General requirements

- Scientific writing style, as well as good grammar, must be used.
- Content must be organised in a logical sequence.
- Articles must be relevant and scientifically significant.
- In the case of research and review articles, the methodology must be sound.

Style requirements

- The manuscript must be written in MSWord format.
- Use arial, size 11 font and 1.5 line spacing.
- Margin widths should be 2.54 cm all around.
- Round percentages accurately to 1 decimal point.
- Include leading zeros, e.g. $p < 0.05$, not $p < .05$.
- Scientific measurements must be expressed in SI units.
- Abbreviations and acronyms should only be used if absolutely necessary and must be defined on first use, but preferably not in the abstract.
- Only proper names should have capital letters.
- Quotation marks should only be used for direct quotes.
- Footnotes must not be used.
- Pages should be numbered consecutively.

References

- All statements should be appropriately referenced.
- References should be set out in the **Vancouver style** according to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors:
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html.
- References should be inserted in the text as superscript numbers and listed at the end of the article in numerical order (not alphabetically).
- Only approved **abbreviations** of journal titles should be used.
- References must be of good quality (use primary sources from peer reviewed journals wherever possible).
- Personal communication and unpublished observations may be cited in the text, but not in the reference list.
- The accuracy of references is the author's responsibility.

Content

Title page:

- This page should contain the title, the author(s)' full names, all the author(s)' position(s) in public sector departments and/or affiliations to academic institutions (if relevant), and the physical address and contact details (telephone number and e-mail address) of the corresponding author. **Authors who are members of MMPA, SAIOH, SASOHN or SASOM must indicate this membership.**
- The title must reflect the contents of the manuscript, without being overly long.
- A word count should be included on this page.

Abstract page:

- Abstract: see article categories for detailed instructions.
- Provide a maximum of five keywords or terms that will be used for searches for electronic retrieval of information. They must be specific, and reflect what is essential about the paper. It is preferable to use keywords that do not appear in the title of the manuscript.

Main body of paper:

- This should include Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusions and recommendations sections.
- *Introduction*: see article categories for detailed instructions.
- *Methods*: see article categories for detailed instructions.
- *Results*: see article categories for detailed instructions.
- *Discussion*: see article categories for detailed instructions.
- *Conclusion and recommendations*: This section must be logical, reasonable and practical, supported with evidence. Do not start a new topic, present new information that is not in the discussion, or repeat the Introduction. Conclusions must relate to the findings, whilst recommendations should be logical and feasible. Areas for further study and implications for practice must be indicated in the recommendations.

Acknowledgements and Declaration

- Acknowledgements should be indicated after the Conclusions and recommendations. All sources of funding must be declared and the role of the funding source must be described, where applicable (e.g. costs of specimen analysis, data analysis, manuscript submission, etc.).
- Declarations of conflict of interest and affiliation, and funding, should be indicated after the Conclusions and recommendations. Any affiliations to commercial organisations or conflicts of interest should be declared, in accordance with the policy on conflict of interest provided by the World Association of Medical Editors (<http://www.wame.org/about/conflict-of-interest-in-peer-reviewed-medical>).

Lessons learned

- Lessons learned: A text box with a maximum of five points drawn from the study which practitioners can apply in their practice, must be provided.

Statistical analysis of results:

- When comparing groups or samples, measures of the estimated magnitude of effect or association, such as rate ratios or differences in means, should be used;
- Comparisons of disease or injury frequency should use epidemiologic measures of association such as the rate ratio, odds ratio or risk difference;
- Where possible, provide confidence intervals and/or p values for measures of association.

Tables and figures

Tables and figures should be understandable without having to consult the text. They should be numbered using Arabic numerals.

Tables: The caption should go above the table.

Figures: The caption should go below the figure.

Illustrations and photographs

Photographs (without identifying details of patients, products or places) must be submitted as images of at least 300 dpi.

Photographs must include the name of the photographer to be credited in the published paper.

Illustrations should be submitted separate to text, in electronic format

All these accompanying materials should be clearly identified by means of captions that are also indicated in the text of the manuscript.

Supplementary materials

Additional materials to accompany articles, which can be published online, must be clearly labelled as such. These materials must not be essential for understanding the paper; they are intended to complement the paper. These materials will be included with the manuscript for peer review.

Submission

All pages of the manuscript must be submitted as a single document, in MS Word format, including figures and tables.

However, illustrations and photographs must be submitted as individual documents.

Submission must be made online at www.occhealth.co.za.

Article categories

Original research

Articles reporting original, relevant research with sound methodology are welcomed. Studies with poor methodology, such as quantitative studies with small sample sizes, non-probability sampling designs, short intervention follow-up times and inadequate control, are likely to receive adverse peer reviews. Similarly, qualitative studies with poor methodology, such as incongruence between the research tradition and the data collection and analysis methods, inappropriate sampling strategy, and inadequate measures for trustworthiness, will also lead to poor reviews. Original research articles should not exceed 3 000 words (excluding the title, author's details, abstract, keywords, acknowledgments, declaration, references, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title page

Abstract page

- The abstract must be structured wherever possible (Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, Conclusion), and be less than 250 words. It should be a concise summary of the essential aspects of the article. As this may be published on its own, it should be understandable without the need to read the main text.

Introduction

- This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, the definition and delimitation of the research problem, the need for the study (i.e. the gap in knowledge), the importance of the study, and the purpose/aim and objectives/ hypotheses of the research. The cited literature (which may be part of the introduction or a separate section) must be relevant, of good quality, critically discussed and correctly acknowledged.

Methods

- The date when the research was conducted must be provided. The research design and methodology employed must be clearly described and justified. The latter includes a description of the study site, the study population, sampling strategy (method, selection criteria and size), and data collection (type of data, type of tool and its development and testing, if relevant). In the case of intervention studies, the protocol or intervention must be clearly described. Results for randomised trials must be reported in accordance with the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) available at <http://www.consort->

statement.org/consort-statement/overview0/. For quantitative studies, validity and reliability issues must be described and the statistical tests for analysis must be relevant and appropriately interpreted. For qualitative studies, the trustworthiness of the findings must be described and the analytical methods must be appropriate. A brief description of how ethical issues were addressed as well as evidence of ethical clearance by an accredited research ethics committee must be provided (the name of the organisation and an Ethics Clearance Number).

Results

- These must be accurate, comprehensive, unbiased and relate to the purpose and objectives/ hypotheses of the research. For quantitative studies, authors may be requested to obtain statistical assistance at their own cost if reviewers are concerned about the accuracy and appropriateness of the statistical analyses. For qualitative studies, quotes must be provided to support conclusions. Provide the results for all measures stated in the Methods section. Present detailed data in tables and figures. Report the results in the same order as the research questions/ objectives/ hypotheses and measures. Do not include discussion, explanation or references. Avoid reporting results that are not part of the study's research questions/ objectives/ hypotheses.

Discussion

- The findings should be discussed in the light of the literature, in relation to the purpose and objectives/ hypotheses, and should indicate how the paper has contributed to the body of knowledge. Compare the results with other studies. Acknowledge study limitations which might have influenced the results. Avoid repetition of the results, the introduction of new or irrelevant information, and discussion of results that are not part of the study's research questions/ objectives/ hypotheses.

Conclusions and recommendations

Lessons learned

Acknowledgements

Declaration

References

Review article

Articles involving a state-of-the-art review of the literature must contribute to the body of knowledge on a specific topic, and not just repeat previously documented findings. The articles should not exceed 3 000 words (excluding the title, author's details, abstract, keywords, acknowledgments, declaration, references, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title page

Abstract page:

- The abstract should include the purpose of the paper, and a brief description of the search strategy, main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction

- This should clearly indicate the nature of data gathering, the main issues to be covered, definitions, the need for the review (i.e. the gap in knowledge), the importance of the paper and the purpose and objectives of the review.

Methods

- The search strategy to identify good quality and relevant literature must be clearly described and justified. This would include the search terms, what databases, journals and books were searched, the time period searched, and the selection criteria used. The latter would include

the author's credentials, their affiliations, the scholarly publisher or journal, the date of publication, peer-reviewed or not, and a primary or secondary source.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

- The review should be comprehensive in terms of including the main studies by experts on the topic, critically appraising and comparing their findings, highlighting methodological flaws, identifying the gaps in the literature, and indicating how the paper has contributed to the body of knowledge. It can be thematically or methodologically organised. The literature must be correctly acknowledged and referenced.

Conclusions and recommendations

In addition to the guideline under 'Content', the conclusions should summarise the major contributions, and identify gaps and contradictions.

Lessons learned

Acknowledgements

Declaration

References

Case study

Case studies should be less than 1 500 words (excluding the title, author's details, abstract, keywords, acknowledgments, declaration, references, tables and figures), and should describe: unexpected associations and events; unique cases in terms of the condition/event/problem/setting/exposure/management; cases that highlight legal or ethical issues; or new findings that contribute to an understanding of the condition/ event/ problem/management strategy. The case must be related to occupational health or safety. The case study should be written in the active voice and in the first person. For example, "we treated the patient" instead of "the patient was treated".

The following elements must be included:

Title page

Abstract page

- The abstract should include the purpose of the paper, that it is a case study, the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction

- Must provide a brief reason or purpose for reporting the case, with a clear statement of the problem. Include a statement indicating how ethical issues have been addressed, particularly informed consent from relevant parties and measures to ensure confidentiality. Written patient consent must be obtained by the authors for clinical material submitted for publication. A signed statement that this consent is held by the authors is required before publication. Evidence of ethical clearance by an accredited research ethics committee must be provided (the name of the organisation and an Ethics Clearance Number).

Case description

- This should consist of an adequate, clear description of the case. Clinical case studies should include demographic details, the chief complaint, the history of the present complaint, relevant health history, diagnosis, treatment, clinical course and outcome.

Results

- Results of all investigations, with normal reference values should be provided. The case can be illustrated with the use of charts, figures, graphs and photographs (with identifying details removed). Permission must be obtained to use these. Supplementary material may be included for placement on the web site.

Discussion

- The discussion must include a concise discussion of the case, with supportive evidence in the form of scientific literature, including legislation, guidelines and systematic reviews. Alternative explanations or controversies must be considered and rejected on the grounds of supportive evidence.

Conclusions and recommendations

Lessons learned

Acknowledgements

Declaration

References

Back to basics

This is an informative article on a relevant practice-related occupational health, hygiene or safety topic. The main aim is to enhance professional practice. The article should not exceed 3 000 words (excluding the title, author's details, abstract, keywords, acknowledgments, declaration, references, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title page

Abstract page

Introduction

- This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, the reason for the article and its purpose. The cited literature (which may be part of the introduction or a separate section) must be relevant and correctly acknowledged.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

- The information should include basic principles, concepts, guidelines and evidence-based knowledge underlying the topic, be up-to-date, highlight emerging issues, and be conducive to continuing education. The contents must be supported by literature.

Conclusions and recommendations

Lessons learned

Acknowledgements

Declaration

References

Opinion piece

An opinion article related to occupational medicine, health, hygiene or safety. The main aim is to engage readers and stimulate debate. The article should not exceed 2500 words (excluding the title, author's details, abstract, keywords, acknowledgments, declaration, references, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title page

Key words

Introduction

- This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, the reason for the article and its purpose. The cited literature (which may be part of the introduction or a separate section) must be relevant and correctly acknowledged.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

- The contents must be supported by literature.

Conclusions and recommendations

Acknowledgements

Declaration

References

Issues in occupational health

An informative article related to any aspect of occupational medicine, health, hygiene or safety that does not obviously fall into one of the other categories. The main aim is to inform and educate readers about new developments in their specialities or in areas that affect them (e.g. legislation, guidelines, formation of working groups, feedback from workshops). The article should not exceed 2500 words (excluding the title, author's details, abstract, keywords, acknowledgments, declaration, references, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title page

Key words

Introduction

- This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, the reason for the article and its purpose. The cited literature (which may be part of the introduction or a separate section) must be relevant and correctly acknowledged.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

Conclusions and recommendations

Acknowledgements

Declaration

References

Short report

A short report on a research study will be published in the hard copy of the journal, and the full report, which complies with the **Original research** category requirements, will be published online. The type of study that will be published in this manner is one which does not add important new knowledge on a topic but is considered worthy of publication because it contains results pertaining to the southern African region which need to be disseminated. Pilot studies with useful results but small samples could also be considered for publication as a short report. Authors whose full reports are considered to fall into this category will be requested to supply an abbreviated paper that includes an abstract, keywords, introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusions and recommendations. It should contain only one table or figure, a maximum of 12 references and not exceed 1 000 words.

Correspondence

Scholarly correspondence in the form of Letters to the Editor or a commentary must relate to an article recently published in the journal. The purpose is to facilitate interpretation of the article through additional explanation, information or illustration, provide constructive criticism and stimulate debate. Such correspondence should not exceed 500 words, and statements must be supported with good quality literature. Correspondence is not usually peer-reviewed, although in some instances the Editor may send it out for review. Author details must include their current position and full address and declare any competing interests. The author/s of the original article will be invited to reply to the correspondence.

Book reviews

In-depth reviews of new books on occupational medicine, health, hygiene and/or safety will be published provided that the review is positive, relevant for the readership, and the book is recommended. The review must be conducted by a peer reviewer of integrity with good knowledge of the subject and without a vested interest. It should not exceed 1 000 words.

The following elements must be included:

- authors'/editors' names and initials, title of the publication, edition, date of publication, publisher and place of publication, ISBN number, format (hardback or paperback), number of pages, price;
- author's or editors' expertise;
- intended audience;
- description and critique of the structure and content of the book;
- use of tables/diagrams/illustrations
- evaluation of the scientific quality, comprehensiveness, readability and usefulness for the target audience; and
- in the case of new editions of existing books, a description of the new content.

Proofs

Corrected manuscripts, once approved for publication by the author/s and the Editor, will be submitted to the publisher. Thereafter, the publisher will complete the layout of the material, and will provide the author/s with an electronic proof of the final pages in Adobe portable document format (pdf). Alterations to proofs must be limited to misprints or factual errors. Major alterations or new material cannot be accepted.