

# My manuscript was rejected, and now?

Meu manuscrito foi recusado, e agora?

We frequently receive a rejection or a request for major revisions of manuscripts submitted for publication in a journal of interest. As a result, feelings of anger, discontent and/or indignation arise, often with intensity that sets us apart from reason. After all, we, the researchers who designed and planned the study so carefully, submitted to the Ethics Review Committee and received approval, patiently followed the phases of collecting and processing data, were delighted with the results of the analysis and prepared the manuscript with care, certainly hoped that the reviewers and editor of the journal would be able to recognize the value and beauty of our study. How are we to deal with a polite answer received from the journal, but whose content informs us that our manuscript is not relevant and/or is not well written or properly grounded? The fact is that when we receive a manuscript rejection, we also face a feeling of personal rejection that often prevents us from accepting the limitations of the study and/or errors made in its elaboration.

Following our initial reaction, we question: to whom should we attribute the blame for this situation? Wasn't the journal as good as we thought? Hasn't the chief-editor or editors of the area understood the value of the manuscript? Didn't the reviewers conduct an adequate and free evaluation of our paper? It is true that at all stages of the processing of a manuscript in a journal, there is a person who is vulnerable to make mistakes.

If major reviews of the text is requested, there is a possibility, although very small, that when we answer to the reviewers' questions the manuscript might be considered for publication in the journal. In this case, the authors often make an enormous effort in trying to answer and/or write justifications to the reviewers critiques.

In the Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy (BJPT), a manuscript may be rejected in different stages of the reviewing process. The chief editor may reject an manuscript before submitting it to the area editors because it does not meet any specified item in the journal's guidelines<sup>1</sup>, or it is not characterized as an original study, once a database search revealed several articles on the same theme that have already been published. Another initial rejection may occur from the decision of the area editor. In both cases, the manuscript is not sent for peer review. Finally, the decision to reject can result from the negative ratings of at least two of the three reviewers who analyzed the manuscript, and provided strong arguments to support the decision.

The reasons leading to the rejection include, among others, that the submitted manuscript is not in accordance with the editorial policy, or it does not meet the journal's priority (ie, may not have merit in the pre-analysis phase), even if the text and the methodological quality are adequate. When rejected, the manuscripts must be accompanied by a detailed explanation from the editor. An important factor that ensures the neutrality and impartiality in

<sup>1</sup>The authors' guidelines of the Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy are available online at: <http://www.scielo.br/revistas/rbfis/pinstruc.htm>

the process of rejection is the “blinding”, ie, the reviewers remain anonymous to the authors, and the authors are not identified to the reviewers for expressed recommendation of the editors, who emit impartial and impersonal decisions.

The quality of the opinions expressed by reviewers does not always satisfy the authors, but it certainly reflects the reality of the areas of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences. The BJFT gives preference for reviewing solicitations from researchers or professionals recognized in their area of expertise, who have respectability in the academic-scientific community. With the growth of the area and increase number of postgraduate programs in the country, the quality of the submitted articles as well as the emitted opinions tend to improve substantially.

The rejection process of a manuscript is an experience encountered by many of us, including editors, area editors and reviewers who contribute to BJPT. Sometimes the manuscripts are excessively delayed in the review process because they depend on the punctuality of editors, area editors and the three reviewers who analyze them. We are all subjected to the same rules and inherent conditions of the process.

The researchers who have their manuscript rejected in a journal may initially deny such decision. However, when they get over the initial phase, they can find ways to improve the content of their work and submit it to another journal. Thus, instead of maintaining the attitude of looking for a culprit to justify a rejection, this situation should make us reflect, and may also suggest new directions of research or approaches to be tested in future studies.

The rejection of a manuscript is a possible outcome in the reviewing process and should not be interpreted as a personal pursuit or faced as a discouraging episode.

**Aparecida M. Catai**  
**Débora Bevilaqua Grossi**  
**Marisa Cotta Mancini**  
Editors  
RBF/BJPT