
Book review

Getting Research Published: An A to Z of Publication Strategy. 2nd edition. Elizabeth Wager. Radcliffe Publishing, 2010. 172pp. £24.99. ISBN 978-184619-408-5.

The key to seeing your manuscript published in your preferred journal and at the right time is choosing co-authors that you get on well with! Or so it would seem from the new edition of Liz Wager's *Getting Research Published*. Of the 200 or so entries in the A to Z section of this book, well over ten per cent deal with topics such as key messages, target journals, order of authors, authorship, and the writing group. These are all topics where friction between authors can spell delays in the publication process.

As in the first edition, the book is divided into three main sections. It begins with a step-by-step roadmap that lays out very clearly what must be done and who must do it. It ends with reprints of a sample of the publications guidelines that are referred to repeatedly throughout the text. The section in between is the real meat of the book (around seventy per cent of the text) and consists of an A to Z compilation of entries varying in length from a couple of lines to about a page and a half.

The first thing that strikes you about this book – right from the first of the five short chapters of the roadmap – is its sheer practical nature. The author has clearly been doing this kind of thing for a long time, and her wealth of experience in dealing with all the tiresome little matters involved in the publication process will certainly help budding authors avoid tying themselves in knots. For instance, there is clear guidance on developing checklists, drafting a covering letter, and working out the time to expected publication. And how many novice authors know that some publishers will demand evidence if you indicate that your previous paper is 'in press'? Or that you yourself are expected to obtain permission to reproduce tables or figures from previously published papers – even when you are the author? Or that you must obtain written consent from people mentioned in acknowledgements or quoted in a 'personal communication'? Without reference to this book, many newcomers could easily become so bogged down in the publishers' bureaucracy that they could overrun their target publication date by many months.

If all this seems just too much, then how about using a medical writer? The author, a medical writer herself, outlines the pros and cons and explains just what a medical writer can and cannot be expected to do.

You may be forgiven for thinking that an A to Z compilation of entries on the topic of publication strategy may be a little dry, to say the least, but the author's style, her user-friendly approach, and the wry humour that permeates all of her writing makes for surprisingly easy reading. For instance, the entry on editorial boards concludes that if you have a friend on the board you could contact them for advice about whether your article would be suitable for the journal 'but you cannot expect much more'. And then adds 'In the worst case, board members may be dead (making

them especially hard to contact and unlikely to intercede on your behalf)'. At the end of the entry on galley proofs, a concept made almost obsolete by new technology, we learn that a galley is 'the rectangular tray into which metal type used to be set, not an ancient ship.'

The A to Z section of the book will ensure that this is a well-thumbed reference work for many people. Information can be easily and quickly found, making the book a useful desktop companion. Words or phrases that are entry titles are printed in bold text whenever they are used, so guiding you from one entry to another. The entries are accompanied by citations to guidelines, organizations, and pertinent comments and articles, leading you to more detailed information. Even though there is a distinct medico-pharmaceutical bias in the writing and examples used, reflecting the author's experience, this book should be an invaluable resource for anyone writing professional articles for publication, whether they are in industry or academia, in biomedicine or other areas.

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