Author’s response to reviews

Title: Biomedical journal speed and efficiency: a cross-sectional pilot survey of author experiences

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Author’s response to reviews:

Reviewer reports RIPR-D-17-00018R2:

Reviewer #1: I thank the authors for thoroughly considering my previous comments. I think the paper is acceptable for publication.

When I was re-reading the results presented in the abstract "" I was struck by two points that I did not previously mention. Perhaps they are useful to consider?

Response:

We would like to thank the Reviewer for their thorough and helpful comments. Furthermore, we appreciate the opportunity to address the two additional points outlined below.

1. The 'average' time between acceptance and publication is two months. As the authors will know that although the publication date will seem like a straight forward calculation meaning for traditional publishing. However, Most of these journals have online portals and have been known to publish e-ahead of print and than some time later more fully release the paper for publication. Should the authors state which publication date they used?

Response:
Thank you for this comment. While we were planning this study, we decided to use the date of first publication (online or print). On Page 6 of the Methods section we addressed this comment: “For each article published by the corresponding author included in our study, we used the full-text articles to determine the date of first publication (online or print).”

2. The two-month delay from article acceptance to publication is more understandable for some journals but not others. For example, strictly online journals, such as this one, are unlikely to take two months from acceptance to publication (and newer publication models will take only hours between acceptance and publication, for example f1000). What proportion of journals were strictly online ones? Is this a relevant point for paper?

Response:

We would like to thank the Reviewer for this suggestion. While it is possible that additional journal characteristics will be related to the observed two-month delay, we did not extract this information. This is certainly something that could be evaluated in future investigations.

Reviewer #2: Thank you for revisions to the paper.

I think the revisions are largely appropriate. I have three comments

Response:

We would like to thank Reviewer 2 for their helpful comments.

1. I'd suggest some revisions to the discussion and to the conclusion to reflect the fact that this is a small pilot survey and the results have to be taken as such and not over-generalized.

   eg, the first paragraph of the discussion is too strong.

The authors state:

"These findings suggest that the majority of clinical research studies were published within a year of first submission, which may contradict prior perceptions that the biomedical publication process is too slow"

However, they can only draw conclusions relevant to this study, which they themselves note is a pilot, and this sentence and the related one in the conclusion should be revised accordingly.

I'd suggest they look for other similar text and tone down as needed.

Response:
Thank you for this comment. We have updated the sentence highlighted by Reviewer 1 to better reflect that our findings come from a pilot study. With respect to cautiousness of our conclusion, we have closely reviewed the text of our Discussion and ensured that we have interpreted our findings cautiously.

Page 10, Discussion Section:

These findings suggest that the majority of clinical research studies in this sample were published within a year of first submission. Although our data come from a pilot study, our results may contradict prior perceptions that the biomedical publication process is too slow.

2. The authors state

"Future cross-sectional surveys on this topic may benefit from focusing on specific groups of corresponding authors (e.g., those submitting from US institutions)."

I am not sure why US authors would be a more responsive group. The group that might be more responsive would be a specialty group, especially if an expert from that group is involved.

Response:

Thank you for this comment. In our limitations section (Page 11) we noted that: “language barriers may have limited the number of eligible respondents.” For this reason, we suggested that “Future cross-sectional surveys on this topic may benefit from focusing on specific groups of corresponding authors (e.g., those submitting from US institution). We have now changed US institutions to 'english-speaking countries'. We also agree that certain specialty groups may be more responsive and have updated our manuscript to reflect this suggestion.

Page 10, Discussion:

"Future cross-sectional surveys on this topic may benefit from focusing on specific groups of corresponding authors (e.g., those submitting from english-speaking countries or certain specialty groups)."

3. There does not appear to be a specific link to the survey tool in the paper itself, though I note is in the supplementary material.

Response:

Thank you for this comment. We have included the full survey tool in the supplementary document.