Reviewer’s report

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

Version: 0 Date: 17 Oct 2017

Reviewer: Virginia Barbour

Reviewer’s report:

Thanks for asking me to review this paper which sought to understand the experience of published biomedical authors. The results seem fairly straightforward and are appropriately analysed.

Comments

The authors identify the major issue which is the low response rate of the authors. It is hard to know how this may have affected the results but my specific worry would be that there is substantial under-representation of authors who had a prolonged/poor publishing experience or who simply could not recall what happened before the current submission.

It would seem to be especially likely that there is a bias in the sample given how highly the authors rated their own research. The finding that authors have a quick publication time and a low number of peer reviews suggests that either authors are getting quick rejections or are not recalling all the submissions. Hence, it would be useful to explore this result further.

Furthermore, it would be useful to see the data for the number of journal submissions as a scatter plot - I think this would be informative.

I appreciate that this may not have been asked but I would like to know if there was data on the time of submission at the last journal submitted to, not just the first.

The authors should provide a copy of the survey that was sent.

I think it would be worth commenting further on differences between the article types, which from figure 2 does seem to be substantial. For example, I am surprised that systematic reviews were published in the lower impact factor journals.

Incidentally, Figure 2 needs a fuller legend. It was not interpretable in black and white, which is how I printed it out to review first(!!)

I don't think figures 3 or 4 are needed.
I am heartened by the fact that more than half the authors would have considered submitting a preprint. This would be an issue worth exploring further.

It would be useful to see how this result changed over time and I hope the authors will repeat the work. In future work I think it would be useful to assess if there was any difference between OA and subscription journals. Were there any questionable journals identified?

The number of author with failed email addresses seems rather high

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