

Instructing the authors

Instructions: problem

- Microwave
- Telephone instrument
- Computer
- Software
 - Instructions nearly always provided
 - However, frequently not read
 - At least, not until things go wrong

Opportunities for instruction

- Instructions to authors
 - Printed
 - Website
- Correspondence
 - Acknowledgement letter
 - Letter indicating decision
 - Acceptance
 - Revision
 - With proofs

Instructions to authors

- Provide information
- Clarify legal and ethical issues
- Detailed vs. brief
 - Too brief: may be inadequate
 - Too detailed: may not be read
 - Need to find a middle path
- ? smaller print version, more detailed on web

Instructions to authors: WAME

- I. Journal's policies for authorship and submission of manuscripts.
- II. May contain more detailed information about the journal's policies regarding manuscript style, tables and figures, acceptable abbreviations, units of measurement, reference style, and related topics.
- III. A description of the journal's process for evaluation of manuscripts and the results of the journal's evaluation process.

Introduce the journal

- Name
- Owner
- Frequency
- Number of volumes per year
- Intended audience

- ? Circulation,
- Databases it is indexed in, impact factor, etc.

Manuscripts

- Scope: areas covered
- Types of papers
- For each type
 - Purpose
 - Length, structure, style
 - Number of figures, tables
 - Number of references
 - Number of authors, etc
- Rapid review mechanism

Manuscripts

- Tables and figures
- Statistics
- Abstracts
 - Unstructured or structured
 - Length, headings
- Keywords
- Abbreviations
- Title page
- Page numbers, headers/footers

References

- Method of citation in text
- Style of references
 - Journal articles
 - Books
 - Book chapters
 - Website resources
- Personal communications, unpublished observations, manuscript in preparation, etc.
- ? Link to NLM site may help

Manuscripts: detailed guidelines

- Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals (www.icmje.org)
- Controlled clinical trials (CONSORT guidelines)
- Systematic reviews (QUOROM guidelines)
- Studies on diagnostic accuracy (STARD guidelines)

Review articles

- Policies
 - Invited / uninvited / both types
 - Uninvited: is prior information to journal needed?
- Length, number of authors
- References: comprehensive or limited

Manuscript: physical form

- Covering letter
- Number of copies
- Physical form
 - Size of paper
 - Type of paper
 - Double spacing, etc
- Simultaneous electronic version
 - Media: Diskette / CD / Zip disk

Details of peer review process

- Provide brief summary of the process used
- Reviewers
 - In-house vs. external
 - Number
- Average time taken
- Authors' suggestions about reviewers: policies
 - Possible reviewers
 - Reviewers to avoid
 - How journal treats these suggestions

Electronic submission

- Details of submission
- Type of files
 - Operating system
 - Word-processor format: rtf, doc, pdf, others
 - Submission of figures
- How to submit forms
 - Copyright, cover letter, authorship, etc
- Supplemental data
- Submission of revised versions

Ethical issues

- Funding source
- Ethics clearance and consent
- Authorship, acknowledgements (COPE guidelines)
 - Contributors' role
 - Guarantor
- Policy on 'competing interests'
 - Authors
 - Reviewers
 - Editors
- Depositing data in databases / databanks

Legal issues

- Copyright transfer
- Repetitive / overlapping publication
- Policies on permission to reproduce previously published material
- Patient permission for clinical photographs
- Possible actions in case of violations
- Retraction policy

Authors' rights

- Acknowledgement
- Time for review
- Proofs
- Reprints: free/paid
- Appeals against peer review
- Complaints against editor / editorial board

Journal performance

- Acceptance rate
- Time to respond to original submission
- Average time from acceptance to printing

Contact information

- Postal address
 - Phone/FAX details
 - Website URL
 - Email
-
- Preferred mode(s) for contact

How often and when?

- At least once in each volume: usually first issue
- ? More frequently
 - Each issue / every alternate issue
 - Consistency is important
 - Include in 'Table of contents'
 - May not be needed if available on web
- Uniformity in printed and online versions

Instructions through correspondence

- Acceptance

- How to submit final version electronically?
- When to expect proofs
- Any pending issues: copyright, authorship declaration, etc.

- Revision

- How to respond, by when?
- Reply: hard copy or online
- Any style changes needed in the previous version

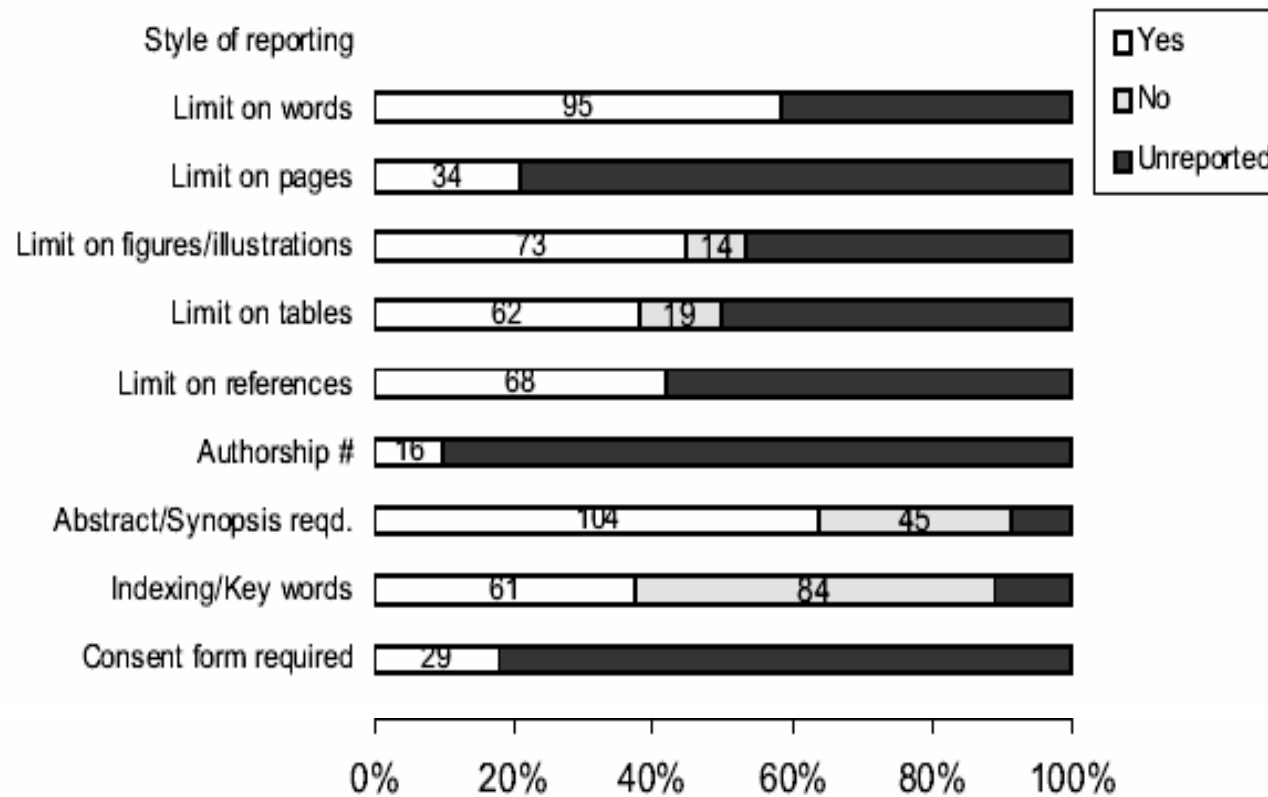
Ensuring compliance

- Checklists
 - Useful for conformity of manuscript to journal style
 - Enclosures, permissions
- Signed statements
 - Funding, conflict of interest
 - Research Ethics
 - Authorship
 - Copyright
- Electronic submissions
 - Hard copy
 - Online confirmation

Ensuring compliance

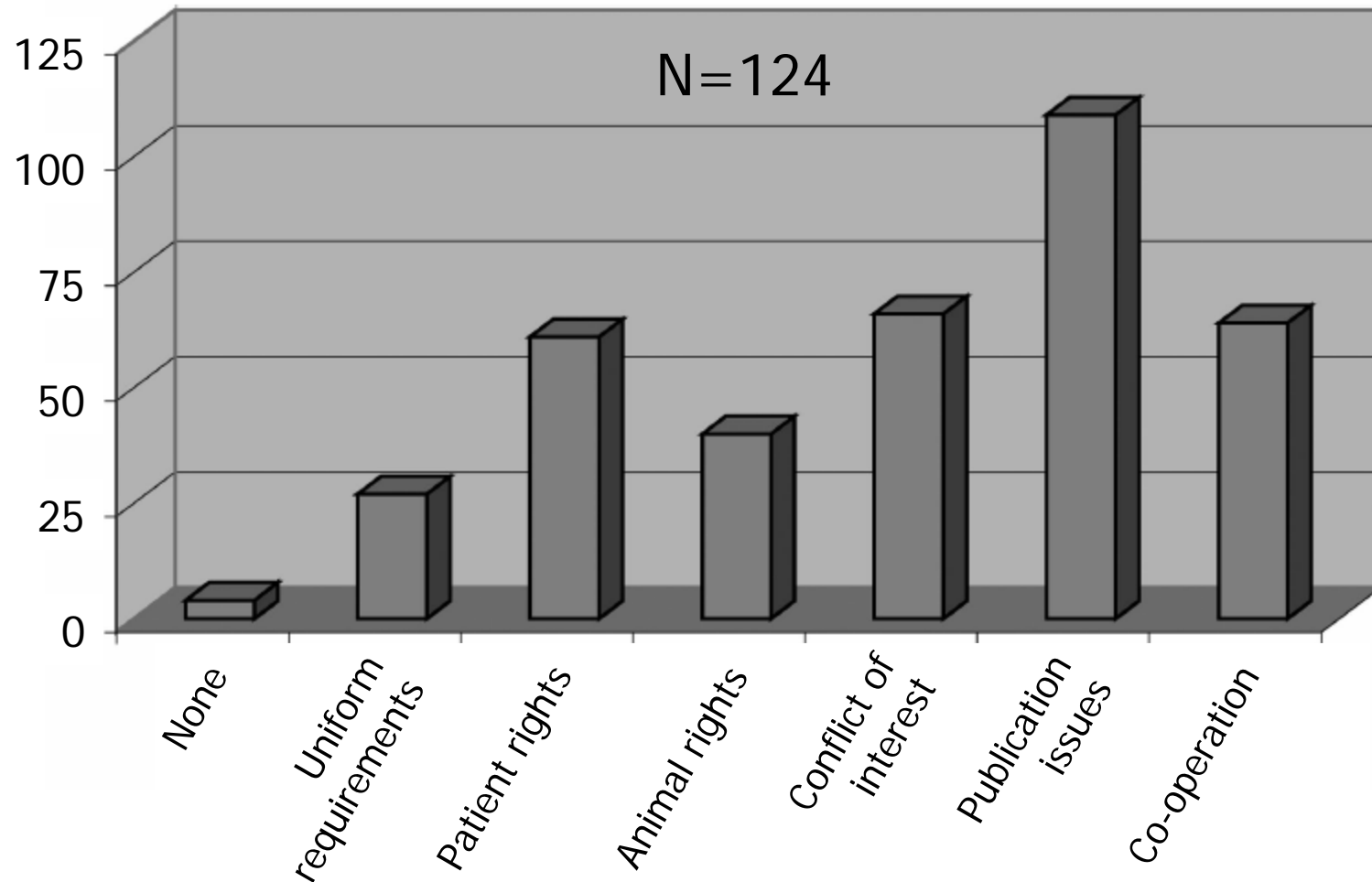
- Clear policies in place
- Minor violations: ignore
- Major violations: should delay processing

Instructions: how complete?



Case reports
(n=163)

Instructions: how complete?



Atlas et al. J Med Libr Assoc 2003; 91: 442.

Instructions: how complete?

- A review of instructions to authors of 122 high-impact biomedical journals
- Only 4 journals included statements on policy about retractions