

Is Length of A Research Paper Mandatory for Publication In Journals?

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On the onset of the release of the first issue of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Journal, I wish to point out an alarming situation of unalterable increase in the length of research articles in various Science Journals. Analytical Chemistry had sniffed this alarming situation way back in 1995 and established a guideline of seven Journal pages. Till 2006, the journal stuck with the guidelines but deviated from it in later years. The year 2008 was marked by an increase in average length of papers (8.0 v/s 7.0). The editorial board felt that an average seven page length already long while average eight pages are alarming [1]. Therefore, the journal has clearly mentioned that absent a convincing justification by the authors, the editor will normally require condensation of longer paper [2].

Since, every Journal has a guideline for publication. But only limited Journals are concern over the length of the research papers. Analytical Chemistry has clearly stated that manuscript length varies with the type of presentation but should not exceed 5000 words including text, figure captions and references [3]. Research papers should not exceed 7,500 words (including allowance for no more than six tables and illustrations) as per the guidelines of Food Chemistry [4]. Similarly, Phytochemistry invites full papers having 6-8 printed pages in length [5]. The research paper occupies not more than 10 printed pages including tables and illustrations for publication in Journal of Ethnopharmacology [6]. Planta Medica has limited the main text in 3,000 words, excluding references, tables, figures and figure legends. Longer manuscripts are only acceptable in cases stating compelling reasons for the length

On some specific issues, however, Journals should encourage the authors to publish length articles on the points such as complexity and sophistication of analytical methods and combination of methods, relevant literature on the subject, authors more dependency on windows based programmes (MS Office), which made easy to write longer paper and need of colored photographs, figures and tables, which requires more space in an article etc.

The foremost problem with long research articles is that the valuable scientific information remains lying on the pool of words and fail to impress the audience or to make the reading interesting and perhaps very few readers enjoy reading long papers. Apart from this, long papers require more time to read especially precious time of reviewer, which sometime delays the review process. In order to set uniformity and to avoid unnecessary delays, authors are encouraged to use Templates [14] or Word Templates [15] for presentation of manuscript by some journals.

Therefore, for the benefit of the readers, editorial board should come out with strict guidelines on paper length. However, long research paper is only encouraged on scientific merit and well justified cases. I feel that the use of other alternatives such as Templates enforce the authors to present their work within the limit, which is otherwise difficult to adopt. With the pace, the electronic supporting information tool is being promoted by Journals, it seem beneficial to overcome the paper length issue. Keeping the importance of research work and rapid publication in view, the significance of setting up guidelines in the aegis of Open Access publications for length paper is looking sound.

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