

Guidelines for authors

OVERVIEW

Occupational Health Southern Africa adheres to the guidelines of the following organisations: the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals)(<http://www.icmje.org/#author>), the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) (<http://publicationethics.org/>), and the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) (<https://health.gov.za/nhrec-home/>).

In addition, the [Declaration of Helsinki](#) (updated in 2024) applies to all research involving human participants, including identifiable human material and data. These principles are fundamental to respect for and protection of all research participants.

Review process

All manuscripts (except correspondence and, in some cases, opinions) are sent for peer review, unless they do not comply with the Guidelines for Authors, or are not relevant to this journal. The review is blinded, meaning that neither the referees nor the authors know each other's identities. Authors are informed of the outcome of the review process by the editor.

Ethics

In accordance with stipulations of COPE and the NHREC (see above), *Occupational Health Southern Africa* requires evidence of ethical approval of all research studies involving human subjects or animals, by an accredited research ethics committee, before a manuscript can be published. The committee that approved the study, and the clearance certificate number, should be included in the manuscript.

Authorship, factual accuracy and copyright

Authors are solely responsible for the factual accuracy of their work and must ensure that their work does not infringe copyright. Submission of the completed [Statement of acceptance of conditions and responsibilities pertaining to the publication of a manuscript](#) by all authors is required prior to the publication of the manuscript. All, and only, the legitimate authors must be listed. This journal subscribes to the criteria for authorship of research articles, developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>). In order to be acknowledged as an author, individuals must have satisfied all of the following three criteria:

1. Contributed substantially to the conception and design of the study, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
2. Drafted the manuscript or revisited it critically for important intellectual content; and
3. Approved the final version to be published.

"Examples of activities that alone (without other contributions) do not qualify a contributor for authorship are acquisition of funding; general supervision of a research group or general administrative support; and writing assistance, technical editing, language editing and proofreading."

Medical writer

The use of a medical writer must be acknowledged.

Statement of acceptance

Before the manuscript can be sent for review, all the authors are required to acknowledge and agree to the following conditions pertaining to ethical issues related to the publication of a manuscript ([Statement of acceptance of conditions and responsibilities pertaining to the publication of a manuscript](#)):

1. Authors are required to declare any potential conflicts of interest. These include financial or personal relationships in the form of dual commitments, competing interests, or competing loyalties (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>).
2. It is the authors' responsibility to determine whether agreement is required from any parties for the use of material in their manuscript, and to ensure that such permission is obtained, so that copyright is not infringed.
3. Authors are required to give the assurance that the content of the manuscript is their own work and, where it is not, that appropriate acknowledgement is given.
4. Authors are responsible for ensuring that statistical analyses contained within the manuscript have been checked for appropriateness and accuracy by a person with a sound knowledge of statistics.
5. Authors must inform the editor of the existence of any other manuscripts that they have submitted to, or had published by, other journals, or that are in the public domain, and that overlap with this manuscript. Copies of such papers must be supplied to the editor.
6. The publishers, editors, SASOM, SASOHN, SAIOH and MMPA are not liable for any damages or losses incurred as a result of any statement contained in *Occupational Health Southern Africa*. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy of manuscripts published, neither the publishers, editors, SASOM, SASOHN, SAIOH or MMPA accept any responsibility for errors or omissions in the content, and reserve the right to edit all contributions. The views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the publishers, editors, SASOM, SASOHN, SAIOH or MMPA; neither do these Societies, publishers or editors endorse or guarantee the products advertised in the journal or claims made by the manufacturers.
7. Once a manuscript is accepted for publication, the exclusive copyright of the manuscript is assigned to *Occupational Health Southern Africa*. Material from the manuscript may subsequently be used by the authors, provided that paraphrasing is applied.

REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION OF A MANUSCRIPT

In addition to complying with the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (<http://www.icmje.org/#author>), all manuscripts and articles should conform to the style requirements for publication in *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, which are indicated hereafter.

General requirements

- Scientific writing style, as well as good grammar, must be used.
- Content must be organised in a logical sequence.
- Articles must be relevant and scientifically significant.
- In the case of research and review articles, the methodology must be sound.

Style requirements

- The manuscript must be written in Microsoft Word format.
- Use Arial font, size 11, and 1.5 line spacing.
- Margin widths must be 2.54 cm all around.
- Round percentages accurately to one decimal point.
- Include leading zeros, e.g. $p < 0.050$, not $p < .050$.
- Scientific measurements must be expressed in SI units.
- Abbreviations and acronyms must only be used if absolutely necessary and must be defined on first use, but not in the Abstract.
- Only proper names must start with upper-case letters.
- Quotation marks must only be used for direct quotes.
- Footnotes must not be used, other than in tables and figures.
- Pages must be numbered consecutively.

References

- All statements must be appropriately referenced.
- Citations and references must be written following the Vancouver referencing style according to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors: <https://www.occhealth.co.za/documents/vancouverreferencingguide.pdf>
- Citation numbers must be inserted in the text as superscript numbers, after the full stop, and listed at the end of the article in numerical order (not alphabetically), as per Vancouver referencing style.
- Only approved abbreviations of journal titles should be used (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/journals/>).
- References must be of good quality (use primary sources from peer-reviewed journals, rather than secondary sources, wherever possible).
- Personal communications and unpublished observations must be cited in the text, but not in the reference list.
- The accuracy of references is the author's responsibility.

CONTENT

Title page

- This page should contain the Title, the author(s)' full names, all the author(s)' position(s) in public sector departments and/or affiliations to academic institutions (if relevant), and the physical address and contact details (telephone number and e-mail address) of the corresponding author. Authors who are members of SASOM, SASOHN, SAIOH or MMPA must indicate this membership.
- The Title must reflect the contents of the manuscript, without being overly long.
- A word count should be included on this page.

SUBMIT THIS PAGE SEPARATELY TO THE MANUSCRIPT SO THAT ALL IDENTIFIERS ARE REMOVED FOR THE REVIEWERS.

Abstract

- Abstract: see article categories below for detailed instructions.
- Provide a maximum of five keywords or terms that can be used for searches for electronic retrieval of information. They must be specific, and reflect what is essential about the paper. It is preferable to use keywords that do not appear in the Title of the manuscript.

Main body of manuscript

- This should include Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusions and recommendations sections.
- Introduction: see article categories below for detailed instructions.
- Methods: see article categories below for detailed instructions.
- Results: see article categories below for detailed instructions.
- Discussion: see article categories below for detailed instructions. Include recommendations in the Discussion. These should be logical and feasible. Areas for further study and implications for practice must be indicated in the recommendations.
- Conclusion: this section must be logical, reasonable and practical, and be supported by evidence from the article. Do not start a new topic, present new information that is not in the Discussion, or repeat the Introduction. Conclusions must relate to the findings.

Funding

All sources of funding must be declared and the role of the funding source must be described, where applicable (e.g. costs of specimen analysis, data analysis, manuscript submission, etc.).

Declaration

Declarations of conflicts of interest and affiliation should be indicated after the Conclusions and recommendations. Any affiliations to commercial organisations should be declared, in accordance with the policy on conflicts of interest provided by the World Association of Medical Editors (<http://www.wame.org/about/conflict-of-interest-in-peer-reviewed-medical>).

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements, if stated, should be placed after the Declaration.

Key messages

Three to five key points (numbered) from the study must be provided.

Statistical analysis of results

- When comparing groups or samples, measures of the estimated magnitude of effect or association, such as rate ratios or differences in means, should be used.
- Comparisons of disease or injury frequency should use epidemiologic measures of association such as the rate ratio, odds ratio, relative risk or risk difference.
- Provide confidence intervals and p values for measures of association.

Tables and figures

Tables and figures should be understandable without the reader having to consult the text. They should be numbered using Arabic numerals. For tables: the title must be above the table; for figures: the title must be below the figure.

Illustrations and photographs

Photographs (without identifying details of patients, products or places) must be submitted as images of at least 300 dpi. Photographs must include the name of the photographer to be credited. Illustrations should be submitted separate to text, in electronic format. All accompanying materials should be clearly identified by means of titles that are also indicated in the text of the manuscript.

Supplementary materials

Additional materials to accompany manuscripts must be clearly labelled as such. These materials must not be essential for understanding the paper; they are intended to complement the manuscript. These materials will be included with the manuscript for peer review.

Submission

All pages of the manuscript must be submitted as a single document, in Microsoft Word format, including figures and tables. However, illustrations and photographs must be submitted as individual documents. Submission must be made online via [Scholastica](#).

ARTICLE CATEGORIES

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Manuscripts reporting original, relevant research with sound methodology are welcomed. Studies with poor methodology, such as quantitative studies with small sample sizes, short follow-up times (longitudinal studies), or inadequate controls, are likely to receive adverse peer reviews. Similarly, qualitative studies with poor methodology, such as incongruence between the research tradition and the data collection and analysis methods, inappropriate sampling strategy, and inadequate measures for trustworthiness, will also lead to poor reviews. Original research articles should not exceed 3 500 words (excluding the Title, authors' details, Abstract, keywords, Declaration, Acknowledgments, References, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title

Abstract

This must be structured, wherever possible (Background, Objectives, Methods, Results, Conclusion), and be less than 300 words. It should be a concise summary of the essential aspects of the article. As this may be published on its own, it should be understandable without the need to read the main text.

Introduction

Clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, the definition and delimitation of the research problem, the need for the study (i.e. the gap in knowledge), the importance of the study, and the purpose/aim and objectives/hypotheses of the research. The cited literature (which may be part of the Introduction or a separate section) must be relevant, of good quality, critically discussed and correctly acknowledged.

Methods

The date(s) when the research was conducted must be provided. The research design and methodology employed must be clearly described and justified. The latter includes a description of the study site, the study population, sampling strategy (method, selection criteria and size), and data collection (type of data, type of tool and its development and testing, if relevant). In the case of intervention studies, the protocol or intervention must be clearly described. Results for randomised trials must be reported in accordance with the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) available at <http://www.consort-statement.org/consort-statement/overview0/>. For quantitative studies, validity and reliability issues must be described and the statistical tests for analysis must be relevant and appropriately interpreted. For qualitative studies, the trustworthiness of the findings must be described and the analytical methods must be appropriate. A brief description of how ethical issues were addressed, as well as evidence of ethical clearance by an accredited research ethics committee, must be provided (include the name of the committee and the ethics certificate clearance number).

Results

Results must be accurate, comprehensive, unbiased and relate to the purpose and objectives/hypotheses of the research. For quantitative studies, authors may be requested to obtain statistical assistance if reviewers are concerned about the accuracy and appropriateness of the analyses. For qualitative studies, quotes from study participants (where relevant) must be provided to support conclusions. Provide the results for all measures stated in the Methods section. Present summarised data in tables and figures. Report the results in the same order as the research questions/objectives/hypotheses and measures. Do not include discussion, explanation, or references. Avoid reporting results that are not part of the research questions/objectives/hypotheses.

Discussion

The findings should be discussed in the light of the literature, in relation to the purpose and objectives/hypotheses, and should indicate how the study has contributed to the body of knowledge. Compare the results with other studies. Acknowledge study limitations that might have influenced the results. Avoid detailed repetition of the results, the introduction of new or irrelevant information, and discussion of results that are not part of the study's research questions/objectives/hypotheses. Include recommendations, where relevant.

Conclusion

Key messages

Declaration

Acknowledgements

References

REVIEW ARTICLE

Articles involving a state-of-the-art review of the literature, including systematic reviews, must contribute to the body of knowledge on a specific topic, and not just repeat previously documented findings. The articles should not exceed 3 500 words (excluding the Title, authors' details, Abstract, keywords, Declaration, Acknowledgments, References, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title

Abstract

The Abstract should include the purpose of the paper, and a brief description of the search strategy, main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction

This should clearly indicate the nature of data gathering, the main issues to be covered, definitions, the need for the review (i.e. the gap in knowledge), the importance of the paper, and the purpose/objectives of the review.

Methods

The search strategy to identify good-quality and relevant literature must be clearly described and justified. This includes the search terms, the databases, journals and books that were searched, the time period searched, and the selection criteria used.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

The review should be comprehensive in terms of including seminal papers and articles written by experts on the topic, critically appraising and comparing their findings, highlighting methodological flaws, identifying gaps in the literature, and indicating how the paper has contributed to the body of knowledge. It can be thematically or methodologically organised. The literature must be correctly acknowledged and cited/referenced. Include recommendations, where relevant.

Conclusion

In addition to the guideline under Content above, the Conclusion should summarise the major contributions, and identify gaps and contradictions.

Key messages

Declaration

Acknowledgements

References

CASE STUDY

The case must be related to occupational health. Case studies should be written in less than 2 500 words (excluding the Title, authors' details, Abstract, key-words, Declaration, Acknowledgments, References, tables and figures), and should describe: unexpected associations and events; unique cases in terms of the condition/event/problem/setting/exposure/management; cases that highlight legal or ethical issues; or new findings that contribute to an understanding of the condition/event/problem/management strategy. The case study should be written in the active voice and in the first person. For example, "we treated the patient" instead of "the patient was treated".

The following elements must be included:

Title

Abstract

The Abstract should include the purpose of the paper; that it is a case study; the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Introduction

This must provide a brief reason for reporting the case, with a clear statement of the problem. Include a statement indicating how ethical issues have been addressed, particularly informed consent from relevant parties and measures to ensure confidentiality. Written patient consent must be obtained by the authors for clinical material submitted for publication. A signed statement that this consent is held by the authors is required before publication. Evidence of ethical clearance by an accredited research ethics committee must be provided (the name of the committee and the ethics clearance certificate number).

Case description

This should consist of an adequate, clear description of the case. Clinical case studies should include demographic details, the chief complaint, the history of the present complaint, relevant health history, diagnosis, treatment, clinical course and outcome.

Results

Results of all investigations, with normal reference values, should be provided. The case can be illustrated with the use of charts, figures, graphs and photographs (with identifying details removed). Permission must be obtained to use these. Supplementary material may be included for placement on the website.

Discussion

The Discussion must include a concise discussion of the case, with supportive evidence in the form of scientific literature, including legislation, guidelines and systematic reviews. Alternative explanations or controversies must be considered/rejected on the grounds of supportive evidence. Include recommendations, where relevant.

Conclusion

Key messages

Declaration

Acknowledgements

References

BACK TO BASICS

This is an informative article on a relevant practice-related occupational health topic. The main aim is to enhance professional practice. The article should not exceed 3 500 words (excluding the Title, authors' details, Abstract, keywords, Declaration, Acknowledgments, References, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title

Abstract

Introduction

This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, the reason for the paper and its purpose. The cited literature (which may be part of the Introduction or a separate section) must be relevant and correctly acknowledged.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

The information should include basic principles, concepts, guidelines and evidence-based knowledge underlying the topic; be up to date; highlight emerging issues; and be conducive to continuing education. The contents must be supported by literature. Include recommendations, where relevant.

Conclusion

Key messages

Declaration

Acknowledgements

References

OPINION

This is an opinion article related to occupational health. The main aim is to engage readers and stimulate debate. It should not exceed 2 500 words (excluding the Title, authors' details, Abstract, keywords, Declaration, Acknowledgments, References, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title

Introduction

This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered and the purpose of the article. The cited literature (which may be part of the Introduction or a separate section) must be relevant and correctly acknowledged.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

The contents must be supported by literature. Include recommendations, where relevant.

Conclusion

Declaration

Acknowledgements

References

ISSUES IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

This is an informative article related to any aspect of occupational health that does not obviously fall into one of the other categories. The main aim is to inform and educate readers about new developments in their specialties or in areas that affect them (e.g. legislation, guidelines, formation of working groups, feedback from workshops). The paper should not exceed 2 500 words (excluding the Title, authors' details, Abstract, keywords, Declaration, Acknowledgments, References, tables and figures).

The following elements must be included:

Title

Introduction

This should clearly indicate the main issues to be covered, and the purpose of the paper. The cited literature (which may be part of the Introduction or a separate section) must be relevant and correctly acknowledged.

Body of the paper (wording will be determined by the topic)

Include recommendations, where relevant.

Conclusion

Declaration

Acknowledgements

References

SHORT REPORT

A short report on a research study is one that does not add important new knowledge on a topic, but is considered worthy of publication because it contains results pertaining to the southern African region that are worthy of dissemination. Pilot studies with useful results but small samples might also be considered for publication as a short report. Authors whose manuscripts are considered to fall into this category will be requested to supply an abbreviated paper that includes an Abstract, keywords, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion. It should contain only one table or figure, a maximum of 12 references and not exceed 2 000 words.

CORRESPONDENCE

Scholarly correspondence in the form of letters to the editor, or a commentary related to an article recently published in *Occupational Health Southern Africa*, will be considered. The purpose might be to facilitate interpretation of the findings of a published study through additional explanation, information or illustration, provide constructive criticism, and/or stimulate debate. Such correspondence should not exceed 500 words, and statements must be supported with good-quality literature, where relevant. Correspondence is not peer reviewed, although, in some instances, the editor may request an opinion from a relevant researcher/expert. Authors' details must include their current positions and full addresses. Competing interests must be declared. The author(s) of the original article will be invited to reply to the correspondence, where relevant.

BOOK REVIEW

In-depth reviews of new books related to occupational health will be published, provided that the review is positive, relevant for the readership, and the book is recommended. The review must be conducted by a peer reviewer of integrity with good knowledge of the subject and without a vested interest. It should not exceed 1 000 words.

The following elements must be included:

- authors'/editors' names and initials, title of the publication, edition, date of publication, publisher and place of publication, ISBN number, format (hardback or paperback), number of pages, price, website/publisher's contact details for purchasing the book;
- authors' or editors' expertise;
- intended audience;
- description and critique of the structure and content of the book;
- use of tables/diagrams/illustrations;
- evaluation of the scientific quality, comprehensiveness, readability and usefulness for the target audience; and
- in the case of new editions of existing books, a description of the new content.

PROOFS

Corrected manuscripts, once approved for publication by the editor and the author(s), will be submitted to the publisher. Thereafter, the publisher will complete the layout of the material, and will provide the author(s) with an electronic proof of the final pages in Adobe portable document format (PDF). Alterations to proofs must be limited to misprints or factual errors. Major alterations or new material cannot be accepted.