

American Heart Association Scientific Sessions

Early Career Session

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Choosing a Target Journal

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Choosing A Target Journal

- Scope of the journal
- Prestige of the journal (NOT the impact factor)
- Breadth of the audience
- Competitiveness of your paper
- Efficiency of the editorial process
- Tradition

Choosing A Target Journal

- Scope of the journal
 - Basic, translational, clinical, outcome research
 - Subspecialty: EP, intervention, echo, nuclear, MRI, prevention, etc.
 - Interest of the journal in your specific topic

Choosing A Target Journal

- Scope of the journal
- Prestige of the journal (NOT the impact factor)
 - Do not obsess with the impact factor
 - Go for the most prestigious journal where you have a reasonable chance

Choosing A Target Journal

- Scope of the journal
- Prestige of the journal (NOT the impact factor)
- Breadth of the audience
 - Go for the broadest audience you can get

Choosing A Target Journal

- Scope of the journal
- Prestige of the journal (NOT the impact factor)
- Breadth of the audience
- Competitiveness of your paper
 - Be realistic

Choosing A Target Journal

- Scope of the journal
- Prestige of the journal (NOT the impact factor)
- Breadth of the audience
- Competitiveness of your paper
- Efficiency of the editorial process
 - Don't accept slowness

Choosing A Target Journal

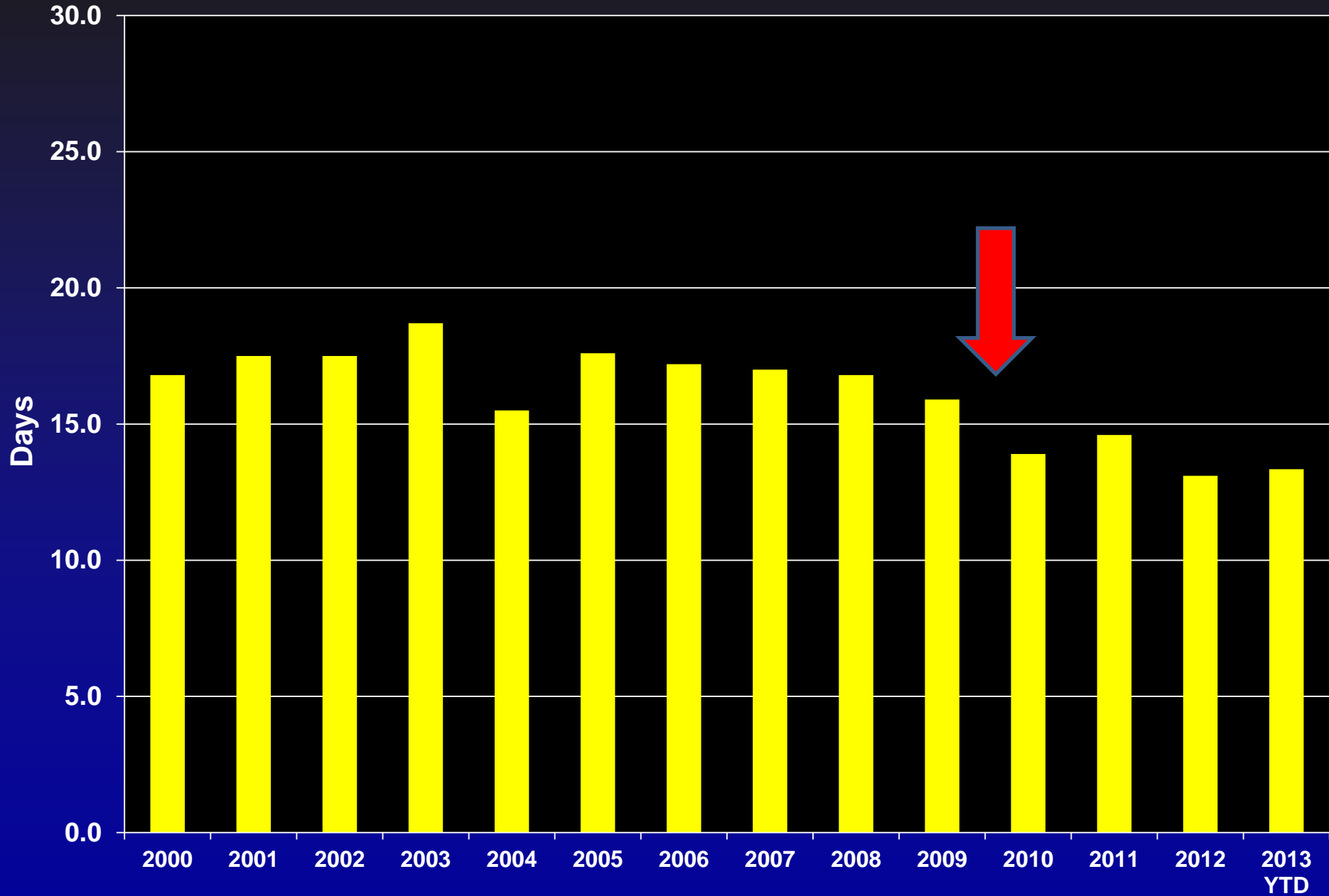
- Scope of the journal
- Prestige of the journal (NOT the impact factor)
- Breadth of the audience
- Competitiveness of your paper
- Efficiency of the editorial process
- Tradition
 - Avoid new journals

The New *Circulation Research*

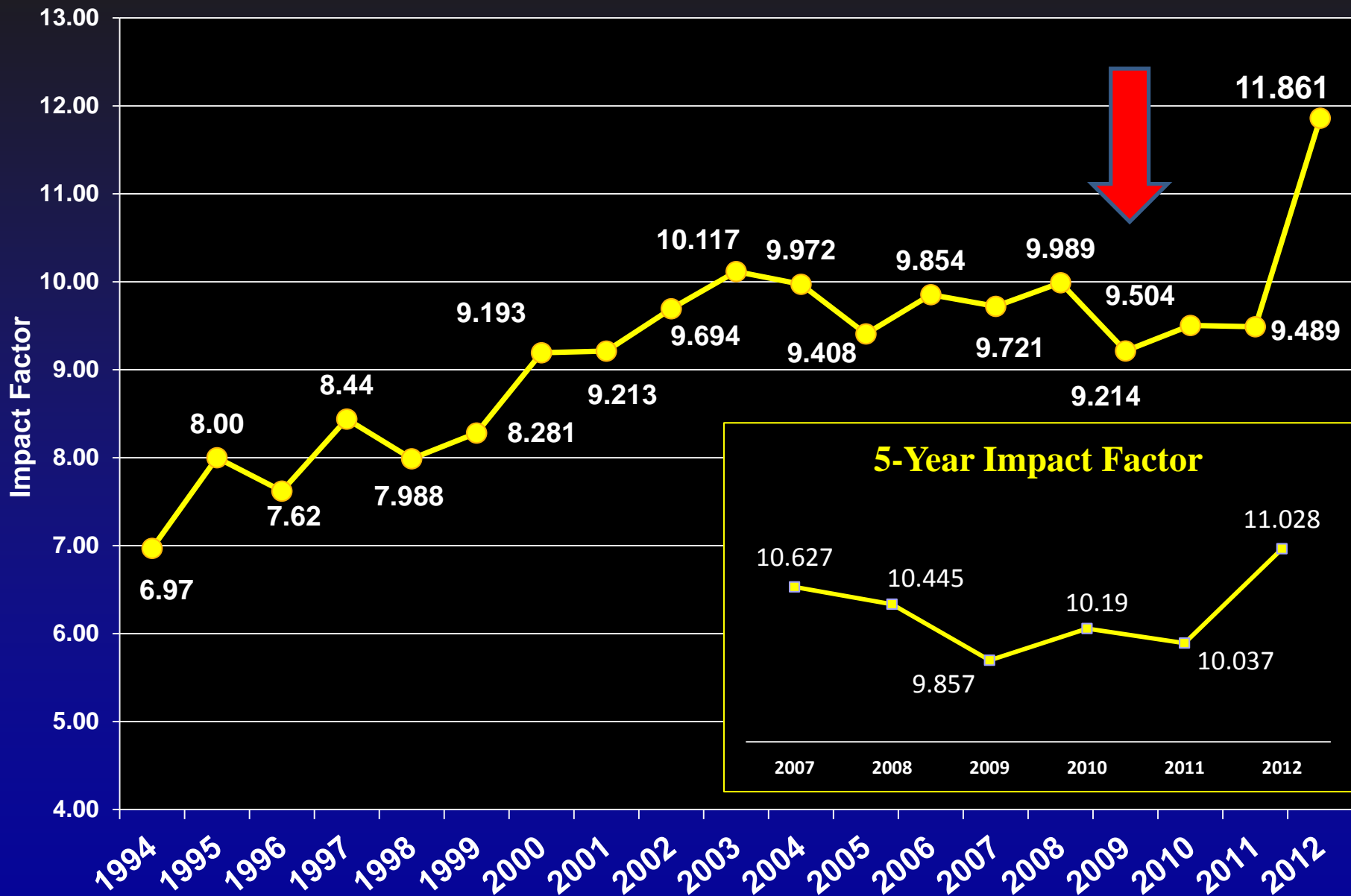
A premier international journal in cardiovascular medicine. Focus is on:

- basic research
- translational research
- clinical research that advances our understanding of the pathogenesis and pathophysiology of cardiovascular disease

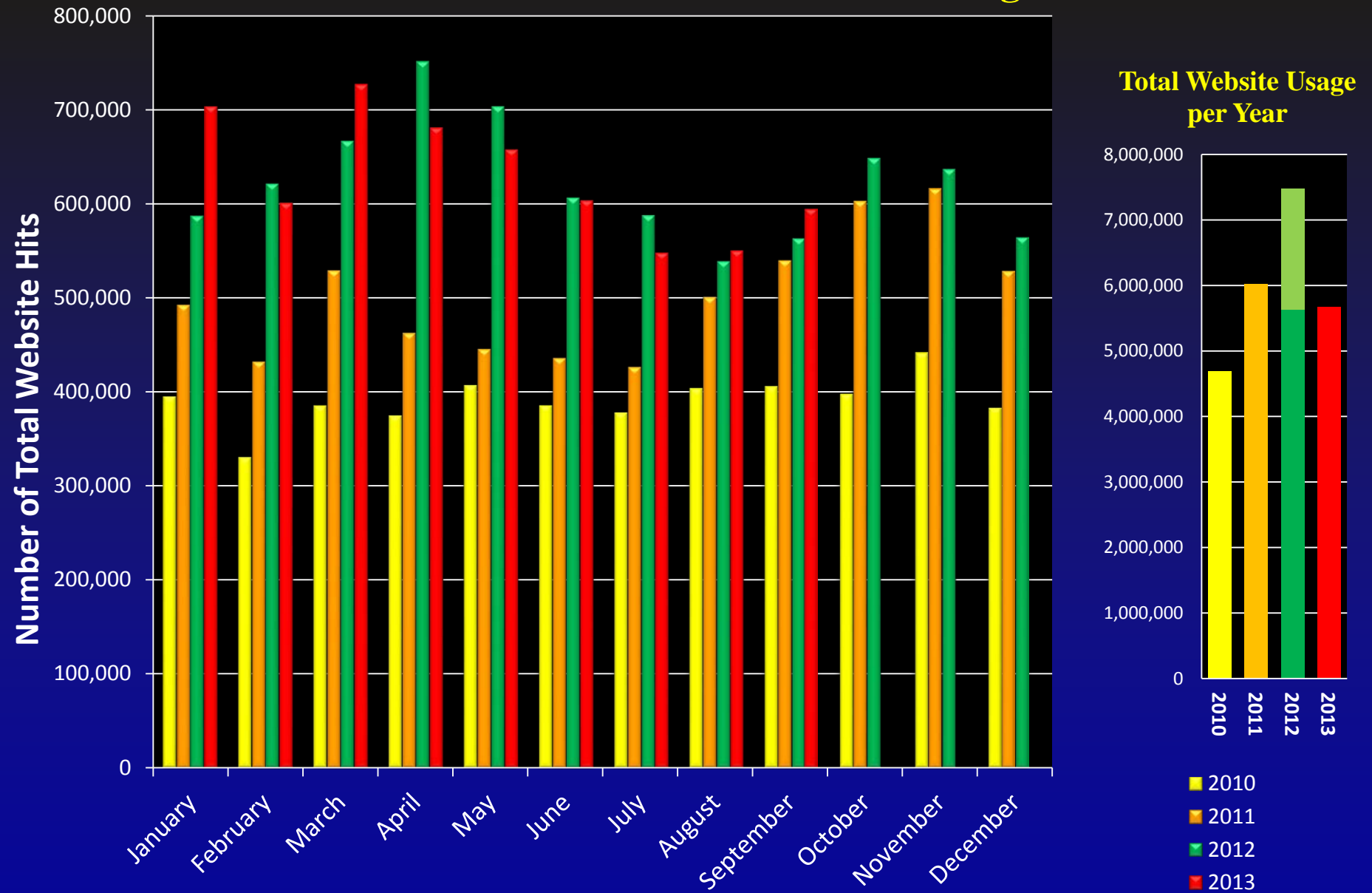
Time to First Decision for All Original Research Articles 2000 to 2013 YTD



Circulation Research Impact Factor



Circulation Research Website Usage Data*



*Website usage data calculates total hits/downloads to journal homepage, all TOCs (current issue and archived), searches, abstracts (current and archived), full text HTML articles (current and archived), PDF articles (current and archived).

WRITING IS AN ART – AND A DYING ART

The single most challenging task that every investigator faces is to write papers and grants.

Writing is a dying art.

It requires time, patience, focus, attention to detail, and multiple iterations – all things to which contemporary culture is antithetical.

As a result of our pernicious culture, fewer and fewer people know how to write.

PUBLISH OR PERISH

- Don't leave your work unpublished. Remember: ***your work does not exist unless it is published*** – if you don't publish it, you have done nothing.
- ***PUBLISH what you do!*** Early in your career, you are an unknown entity. You need to prove that you can conceive, perform, complete, and publish a project. At this stage, the number of publications (particularly first-authored papers) is important.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Writing a good paper is like crafting a strong argument; it requires mastering the art of persuasion.

It could be likened to the work of an attorney who argues a case in court and tries to convince the jury about the innocence (or guilt) of his/her client.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

You must organize your ideas in a logical sequence and express them in a manner that is grammatically and syntactically correct, concise, clear, eloquent, and persuasive.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Divide the work, start easy

- In anything you do, the most difficult part is to start.
- Don't approach writing a paper as one giant, continuous, and stressful effort, but instead as a journey that consists of several small segments. Not a marathon, but a series of brief jogging sessions.
- Don't try to write the whole paper in one or two "binges"; instead, plan several small writing sessions.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Divide the work, start easy

- Start with the easy sections and move to progressively more difficult ones:

- **Front page** (title and authors) (this will motivate you)
- **Methods** (the easiest part to write)
- **Figures, Figure legends, and Tables** (also easy)
- **Results**
- Then tackle **Discussion and Introduction** (the two most difficult parts). I suggest doing the Discussion first, since it is a bit easier than the Introduction.
- The very last thing should be the **Abstract**, since it depends on the rest of the paper and usually repeats sentences used in the paper.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

When in doubt, leave it out

- Keep your exposition terse, simple, and cogent.
- Eliminate frills.
- If you are not sure whether something (a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, concept, argument, statement, or set of data) is really necessary or useful, chances are that it is neither necessary nor useful. In such instances, remember my golden maxim: “*When in doubt, leave it out*”.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Haste is the enemy of good composition

- Be patient. Don't send out the first (or second, or third, or fourth, or fifth) draft, but diligently improve your paper through several iterations until you really like what you see.
- Haste is the enemy of excellence, and certainly a mortal enemy of fluent, elegant, and pleasant prose.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

The “fresh look” method

- After you write an initial draft and revise it a few times, put the paper away and allow some time to elapse before you look at it again. Even a few days are enough.
- This downtime enables you to read your work with a fresh mind; you will then notice many things that you had not noticed earlier, and find many areas for improvement that you had not seen earlier.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Be careful

- When a paper is published, it is published forever. Once you put it in the public domain, you cannot take it back or change it.
- So, think not twice but thrice before you submit a manuscript, and be sure that everything is in order. Read it and re-read it. Check it and double check it, both for content (accuracy and completeness of data, data interpretation, description of methods and results, etc.) and for form (grammar, style, logical flow of ideas, consistency, etc.).

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Be careful

- Don't let your craving for a publication rush you to publish something that you will regret later on or that may come back to haunt you (*verba volant, scripta manent*).

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Ask a mentor or colleague

- One of your mentor's foremost responsibilities is to teach you how to write. If he/she does not help you, you don't have a good mentor.
- Don't be defensive, and don't view corrections or criticisms as an affront to your intelligence.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Introduction

- The Introduction is even more difficult than the Discussion because it must be brief. Brevity requires time and effort.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Introduction

- The Introduction is where you need to answer the questions:
 - Why did you do what you did?
 - Why was it important to do it?
 - Or, put in another way, why should the journal use its limited pages to publish your paper?

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Introduction

- A good Introduction will pique the reviewers' interest and convince them that the paper is worth reading.
- Conversely, a bad Introduction (viz., one that fails to make a cogent argument as to why your study needed to be done) will turn them off, negatively biasing their assessment of the rest of the paper.
- The goal here is to get the reviewers excited about your study, almost salivating in anticipation of your results.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Writing a good Discussion is one of the most formidable intellectual challenges that a scientist encounters. It requires a level of cognitive prowess that usually exceeds that required to conduct the study and to write any other part of the paper (save the Introduction).

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Start by succinctly summarizing the salient findings of your study.
- Then, point out what is new about them: What new knowledge does your paper contribute to science?

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Then, relate your present work to previous work:
 - How do your observations fit into the existing literature?
 - Why are your results different from previous studies?
 - If they are similar to previous studies, what does your study contribute that has not been contributed before?

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Next, discuss your methodology:
 - Why did you choose the model, protocol, and techniques that you chose?
 - Why were those choices preferable to other potential choices?
- Next, discuss the limitations of your study. Sometimes, you can actually turn a perceived weakness into a strength, if you argue your case deftly.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Next, discuss the implications of your findings for science and medicine:
 - What do your results mean?
 - How do they affect the field?
 - Why are they important?

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Finally, provide a concluding paragraph that summarizes the findings and stresses their novelty and importance, and impact, e.g.,
 - will they stimulate further studies?
 - Will they change clinical practice or the design of future experiments?
 - Do they challenge an accepted paradigm?

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Don't assume that the readers will be able to figure out what new concepts your study contributes; it is your job to point those out as clearly as you can.
- Similarly, don't assume that the readers understand why your paper is important; it is your job to spell it out as convincingly as you can.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Discussion

- Don't ignore previous papers that contradict your findings; rather, discuss them.
- Resist the temptation to over interpret your data and don't make conclusions that are not entirely supported by the evidence that you provide; this will only hurt you.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Response to reviewers

- Don't take the decision or the comments personally.
- Start by thanking the reviewer – he/she has volunteered his time for you.
- Repeat verbatim what the reviewer wrote, and write your response below (in a different font).

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Response to reviewers

- Don't be defensive, hostile, or condescending.
- If the reviewer misunderstands or misspeaks, be kind to him/her.
- If the reviewer asks for more data and you do not provide them, explain exactly why and detail explicitly how much work those data would require.

Advice on Writing Manuscripts

Rebuttals

- Allow at least 2 days to elapse before you write. No emotions.
- Refrain from insulting reviewers and editors.
- Thank them for their work.
- Be civil. Be matter-of-fact in your arguments.

Thank You