

FROM THE EDITORS

PUBLISHING IN *AMJ*—PART 3: SETTING THE HOOK

Editor's Note:

This editorial continues a seven-part series, "Publishing in AMJ," in which the editors give suggestions and advice for improving the quality of submissions to the Journal. The series offers "bumper to bumper" coverage, with installments ranging from topic choice to crafting a Discussion section. The series will continue in December with "Part 4: Grounding Hypotheses." -J.A.C.

Ten times.

If this were *AMJ Jeopardy*, the category would be "introductions," and "ten" would be the answer. What's the question?

You might be thinking of one, but this is actually the correct answer to two questions:

- (1) On average, how many times do winners of the *AMJ* Best Article Award rewrite the introductions to their work?
- (2) How many times did we rewrite this introduction? (Disclaimer: we're still not satisfied.)

We all know that articles are like dates: first impressions matter. Although it is typically the shortest section of an article, the introduction (i.e., the opening few pages, before the literature review) determines whether or not readers will continue reading. The introduction provides the interpretive frame that shapes how reviewers read a manuscript during the review process. If reviewers are intrigued by the research question, appreciate its importance, and understand how the study advances understanding of the topic, they are more likely to look for reasons to recommend revision. If reviewers are not excited after reading the introduction, they are more inclined to look for reasons to reject.

Despite the importance of introductions, surprisingly little explicit guidance exists on presenting the essentials of your study in a way that captures reader interest, identifies the "conversation" (Huff, 1999) you are joining, explains what your study contributes, and articulates how you will accomplish your goals. To identify tacit knowledge and

them enough to read further. We'll start with the product: What does an effective introduction entail? Then, we'll unpack the process. How do eminent scholars develop their introductions, and what are best practices and pitfalls?

The Product

In our view, an effective introduction answers three sets of questions:

- (1) Who cares? What is the topic or research question, and why is it interesting and important in theory and practice?
- (2) What do we know, what don't we know, and so what? What key theoretical perspectives and empirical findings have already informed the topic or question? What major, unaddressed puzzle, controversy, or paradox does this study address, and why does it need to be addressed?
- (3) What will we learn? How does your study fundamentally change, challenge, or advance scholars' understanding?

Who cares? An effective introduction captures attention and interest, making readers curious to read on. The central objective is to highlight why the study's topic matters for both theory and practice, planting the study's roots firmly in "Pasteur's quadrant" (Stokes, 1997), where it can contribute to both basic and applied knowledge. The most effective introductions share the same features as ideas and teaching that "stick" (Heath & Heath, 2007): simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibil-