

The role of scientific publishing in the development of early career investigators

The United States National Institutes of Health defines an early stage investigator as an investigator who has completed her terminal research degree or clinical training within the past 10 years.¹ The International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis (ISTH) uses a somewhat different definition, classifying young investigators as those under age 35.² Other organizations use still other criteria. No matter which definition is employed, early career investigators (ECIs) rely on scientific publishing as a means of publicizing and promoting their work, growing their reputation, and advancing their career.

Despite its importance to career development, the scientific publishing enterprise may seem like a black box to many ECIs. Which journal should I submit my paper to? How high should I aim? What is a journal looking for? How are peer reviewers selected? Should I list preferred or non-preferred reviewers or is it better to leave those fields blank? Why is peer review of my manuscript taking so long? The peer reviewer didn't understand my paper; now what are my options? Should I accept an invitation to peer review a paper? What is the editor looking for in my peer review? What's in it for me? These are just some of the questions that plague ECIs as they try to navigate a complex system that is imperfect and, admittedly, not always rational.³

There is perhaps no better way for an ECI to get answers to these questions than to get involved in scientific publishing.⁴ *RPTH* aims to pull back the curtain on the process by engaging ECIs, not just as readers and authors, but also as participants in the inner workings of the journal. Two of the journal's Associate Editors (AC and CA) and 25% of its editorial board qualify as ECIs, at least by some definitions. The ECI Associate Editors take on the same work as their later-career counterparts, with the Editor-in-Chief working to mentor them a bit more closely in the process. The journal is engaging editorial board members in the life of the journal through in-person networking at ISTH Congresses and regular communications on journal activities. Many of our invited peer reviewers are ECIs and all who review regularly will receive an annual report of the quality of their reviews. *RPTH* seeks to publish high quality research of all types including work in newer fields (eg, health outcomes research, quality research, implementation science, dissemination science) in which ECIs may be more frequently represented. The journal also communicates with the ISTH Early Career Committee as a means of understanding how *RPTH* can best serve and best involve ECIs.

This interaction is facilitated by having committee members on the *RPTH* editorial board. One output from this communication will be the occasional publication of Forum Articles on career development topics. *RPTH*'s first such article, a piece on the challenges facing early career professionals in thrombosis and hemostasis, was coauthored by several members of the Early Career Committee and appears in this issue.⁵

RPTH acknowledges the power of social media to spread the word about one's research and recognizes the leadership of ECIs in this regard.⁶ The journal website includes a Social Media Guide, which is sent to authors of all accepted articles so that they can learn how to promote and discuss their work with others on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.⁷ We encourage everyone to follow us on Twitter @RPTHJournal, where there are often lively discussions about published articles.

RPTH believes that experience in journal editing early in one's career will afford insight on the process of scientific publishing that will help ECIs advance their own careers. Several ECIs have already shared the positive influence their involvement with *RPTH* has had on their work. Said one editorial board member, "My involvement has enabled me to get an insider's view [...] on the world of medical journals and peer review, which has been helpful for my own submissions and publications." Another ECI stated of his work as a peer reviewer for *RPTH*, "The more I review, the better writer I am."

Following the lead of these individuals, we welcome all interested ECIs to become engaged in *RPTH*. Let us know if you would like to serve as a peer reviewer. Reach out to us if you have ideas about how to improve *RPTH* or make the journal more relevant for ECIs. Tell us how you would like to get involved. Not only will you be giving back to the scientific publishing enterprise on which we all rely, but your involvement is also likely to enhance your understanding of scientific publishing and strengthen your skills as a researcher, writer, and critical consumer of the literature.

RELATIONSHIP DISCLOSURE

MC is Editor in Chief and AC and CA are Associate Editors of *RPTH*. The authors have no other relevant conflicts of interest to declare.

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