

## 9 top tips for getting published in a medical journal

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As a new physician, getting your research published in a journal does more than just improve your CV. It also gives you the chance to share your ideas and experiences, educate others and establish yourself as an expert.

But getting research published isn't easy, so follow these tips from published residents and fellows and Edward H. Livingston, MD, deputy editor of clinical content at *JAMA*, which they shared at the 2014 AMA Interim Meeting in November.

1. **Start by asking a simple question.** "Re-examine what's in front of you," Dr. Livingston said. "It's not necessary to find something new [to research]. ... You can do more to help patient care if you start thinking in smaller terms." For example, consider a question on how to provide optimal care, or how to fix something that's gone wrong.
2. **Choose a timely project with a defined end point.** Benjamin Galper, MD, an interventional cardiology fellow at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, recommends choosing a project that won't take years to complete. "As residents and fellows, we only have a finite amount of time to devote to research," Dr. Galper said. "It's important that you choose a project that you can have a high impact on in a short period of time so you will be a prominent author when the project is published."
3. **Don't be deterred by lack of funds.** Dr. Livingston recommends looking for support at your institution but also said money shouldn't be a major barrier to your work. "There's too much emphasis on needing lots of [money] to solve problems," he said. "Some major science advances were accomplished with minimal funding." Some grant programs also can assist with offsetting costs, such as the AMA Foundation's seed grant program, which offers grants of up to \$5,000 to conduct small research projects.
4. **Get a good mentor.** For Alik Widge, MD, PhD, a research fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, finding a mentor was crucial. "A mentor who has a good track record of publishing in reputable journals can identify opportunities, such as being a co-author on a review article, or doing some analyses on a dataset that a resident could not ordinarily collect," Dr. Widge said. "A good mentor's name often opens doors to higher-impact journals."

5. **Practice writing.** “This is the hard part, the Achilles’ heel of investigators,” Dr. Livingston said. He recommends writing often and having people who can critique your work. Practice makes perfect, he said. “Just keep writing, no matter how awful it is.”
6. **Keep a sharp eye on your abstract, tables and figures.** “For many papers we assess at *JAMA*, we don’t even read them [initially],” Dr. Livingston said. “We just look at the abstract, tables and figures. Those things have to be absolutely perfect.”
7. **Follow the journal’s instructions.** Journals have specific author instructions for a reason—if you don’t follow them, you’ll likely lose your opportunity to be published, Dr. Livingston said.
8. **Build a great reference list.** “There’s no excuse in the modern era for not having a complete reference list,” Dr. Livingston said. Your list should include landmark papers and the most recent publications on your topic. Dr. Livingston recommends anticipating your paper’s peer reviewers, and citing their papers as well.
9. **Have a thick skin.** The research publication process isn’t easy, and rejection is common. You may need to submit your paper to multiple journals and take your paper through many revisions before it’s finally published, Dr. Galper said. “Each peer-reviewed rejection or revision of your paper can make it stronger,” he said. “I have one paper that was rejected by five journals before finally being published, and I believe the final paper is much stronger due to the feedback I received.”

For more insights into how to get your research published, check out tips from Howard Bauchner, MD, *JAMA* editor-in-chief.