Fate of Original Articles Rejected by Revista Española de Cardiología

Destino de los artículos originales rechazados en Revista Española de Cardiología

To the Editor,

A crucial phase in the editorial process of a scientific article is its review by a panel of peers, who analyze its quality and provide constructive criticism to enable the authors to improve the manuscript. Their opinions aid the editor in making a decision on the article’s suitability for publication. The objective of this study was to analyze the final destination of original articles rejected by Revista Española de Cardiología (Rev Esp Cardiol).

We accessed the database of the online submission and review system of Revista Española de Cardiología to compile a list of the 650 original articles rejected over the 4-year period between 1 January 2007 and 31 December 2010. The following data were collected for each article: manuscript reference number, title, authors, type of article, rejection date, article version (number), language, and country of origin (or, in the absence of the latter datum, that of the corresponding author). The resulting list was distributed equally among 8 members of the editorial board of Rev Esp Cardiol, who carried out the corresponding searches in the literature published up to March 2014.

The literature searches were performed in accordance with the following indications: a) to access the PubMed database and copy the title of the article in English; b) if the search failed to yield results, to use the surname and initial(s) of the corresponding author of the article; c) if there were still no results with the preceding measure, and the corresponding and first authors were not the same person, to repeat the search using the surname and initial(s) of the first author. When the search produced results that coincided with a published article, the following information was recorded in a new database: journal, the year the paper edition was printed, date accepted, impact factor assigned to the journal by Journal Citation Reports for the year the article was published, type of article, language, and names of the first and corresponding authors. A positive result was defined as that in which the methodology of the abstract of the article coincided with that of the publication found, regardless of the type of article finally published, except in the case of communications and posters presented at congresses, which were not taken into account. In a second phase, 2 members of the board reviewed the articles one-by-one to fill in all the empty or incomplete boxes. Finally, the information for those articles not producing results in the PubMed search was introduced into Google.com, following steps a, b, and c, as described above.

During the study period, Rev Esp Cardiol rejected 650 original articles (102 in 2007, 142 in 2008, 192 in 2009, and 214 in 2010). Of the 650 rejected original articles, 96% were in the original version, 3.4% had been revised for the first time, and 0.6% had been revised for the second time. Regarding the language of manuscript submission, 80.9% were in Spanish and 19.1% in English. The rejected articles, in descending order of frequency, were sent from Spain, Argentina, Mexico, China, Brazil, Cuba, and Chile.

As of March 2014, of these 650 articles, a total of 287 (44.1% of all rejected papers) have been published. They have been distributed in different article types (in some cases, not comparable from one journal to another), but most (79.4%) retained the format as the initial version. Sixty-five with five percent of these articles were published within 2 years after their rejection by Rev Esp Cardiol. They appeared in 140 different journals, and 36% of the manuscripts were concentrated in 10 journals (9 of which publish in Spanish, whereas the remaining journal publishes only in English). The 5 journals in which these articles most frequently appeared were Medicina Clínica (32 articles), Revista Clínica Española (13 articles), Revista Médica de Chile (10 articles), International Journal of Cardiology (10 articles), and Atención...
Primaria (9 articles). Fifty-seven percent were published in journals with an impact factor; 7% (n = 20) were published in journals with an impact factor higher than 3, according to Journal Citation Reports for the year in which each article appeared (the most frequently cited was International Journal of Cardiology, with 10 articles, 6 of them originals). The language of publication for the rejected articles is shown in the Figure. In one highly interesting case, a rejected article was submitted simultaneously to Rev Esp Cardiol and another journal, in which it was finally published. In addition, among the rejected articles not published elsewhere, there were 5 in which the attempt to publish could be considered redundant, reflecting one of the most common ethical problems faced by this editorial board in recent years.4,5

From our analysis, we can conclude that over half of the original articles rejected by Rev Esp Cardiol remained unpublished for the first 3 years after the rejection. Of the remainder that were finally published, most appeared in journals with an impact factor and publish predominantly in Spanish.

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