

Advice for Authors Considering Submitting to the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*

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Nearly every day, I receive a query from an author about the potential suitability of an article for the *Journal of Graduate Medical Education* (JGME). These inquiries typically include a description of the topic, an abstract, or perhaps a complete manuscript. I am continually impressed by the variety and creativity of the work described by these authors-educators-researchers. Regrettably, only some of the proposed work will be a good fit for JGME and be accepted for an issue. This article is intended to assist—and not dissuade—aspiring authors who are considering submitting their work to JGME.

JGME's Scope

First, as the name implies, JGME focuses on graduate medical education (GME). This means JGME prioritizes articles that address *current* questions or areas of interest related to training residents and fellows (ie, post-medical school physician training). GME is our beat. JGME does not publish articles about other health professions training, unless the training relates to GME in key ways. Articles that concern medical students or practicing physicians may be suitable if there is an overlap with GME. For example, residency program directors are interested in whether medical clerkship grades can predict later performance, as well as how new undergraduate medical education competency frameworks will synchronize with the US Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) Milestones and other international competency frameworks. Specialties are curious about how medical students decide to apply to a particular program and the effects of signaling, geographic preferences, and other new application initiatives. Educators want to know how curricula and clinical experiences during residency affect graduates' career choices and practice outcomes. Everyone wants to know how to efficiently and effectively train faculty for new educational needs. Thus, if your work involves students, practicing physicians, or faculty, it may fit JGME if it relates to current, essential GME issues. In these situations, it is important to briefly explain how the work

relates to GME, in the Background of the abstract or the Introduction of the manuscript.

A common author question is whether a single-specialty article—in a research category (Original Research, Educational Innovation, Brief Report, Review) or a nonresearch category (Perspectives, On Teaching)—is appropriate for JGME, which is read by all specialties. Ideally an article should be of potential interest to more than one specialty, whether via the methods used or reported findings. “Interest” can be tricky to determine. Surgical interventions that cross over to other surgical fields are usually a good fit. Studies concerning family medicine, pediatrics, or internal medicine, which have implications for primary care in general, frequently garner broad interest. Institution-wide reports involving multiple specialties are nearly always a good fit. Very novel methods or interventions used in one specialty may find a home in a Brief Report, if they might be used more broadly. If your work is likely to be of interest to only one specialty or subspecialty, I would recommend submission to a specialty-focused journal, rather than to JGME.

Value and Rigor

Article submissions should be of sufficient value for wider dissemination. Value can depend upon the strength of prior work in the area, which a literature search should disclose. Replication of prior work, in different settings or with different populations, is important early in a field but, at some point, the issue becomes “settled,” with markedly lower value in further replication. Work that extends understanding about GME, is of current interest, and can be generalized to multiple other contexts will have higher value for readers. An example of settled medical education knowledge is the before-and-after intervention study, often assessed with a knowledge test, following a short educational intervention with no active intervention “control.” We know that medical learners are bright and can learn no matter how badly you teach. In the words of Dr David Cook, “If you teach them, they will learn.”¹ These submissions are generally not useful to other programs unless the approach is highly novel in some way. Considerations of generalizability will affect value as well: Is the work useful or applicable in many other settings?

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In addition to whether the work extends our understanding of an area, the rigor or quality of the work is of critical importance. To take a step back, evaluating quality means authors should first identify what type of scholarship they are sharing: research (discovery of new information), review (literature synthesis), program or curriculum evaluation, quality improvement, needs assessment, curriculum description, etc. The type of scholarship should not be left up to the editor to decode. Further, is the work enabled by thoughtful consideration of theoretical or conceptual frameworks?² In quantitative studies, are there sufficient numbers of participants for external validity and for the power to detect differences?^{3,4} In survey studies, is there some validity evidence to support survey use and interpretation, and are survey response rates adequate to represent the population of interest?⁵⁻⁷ Have robust, standard methods been used for qualitative research studies and literature syntheses?⁸⁻¹⁰ Does your quality improvement project use recommended approaches?¹¹ For extremely new areas of inquiry, more preliminary methods may be acceptable, as the goal may be to jump-start conversations and additional study. In summary, a thoughtful approach that aligns methods with the research question and the state of knowledge in that area will increase the chances of publication. JGME provides many articles and several *Hot Topics in MedEd* podcast episodes that describe quality expectations for various types of medical education scholarship.³⁻¹⁷

Article Submission Categories

Another common author question is how to determine which JGME category is best for a particular work. JGME does not usually publish stand-alone needs assessments, descriptions of new curricula, position or policy papers, presentations given at graduations or award ceremonies, consensus proceedings, consciousness-raising papers, or case reports. The research categories of Original Research, Educational Innovation, and Brief Report all use the same JGME format, with word count differences. Thus, it is straightforward to move articles within these categories during the revision process. Authors should feel free to state, in the cover letter, that they are unsure of the correct category and open to advice. Articles can occasionally be moved from a research category to Perspectives, or from Perspectives to On Teaching, with changes in format and content. Choose the category you think is best upon submission: JGME editors can advise you if a change is recommended. Also, JGME has a strong interest in publishing global GME work. We welcome international submissions

and can assist authors with determining if a submission will fit JGME and suggest a category.

Speaking of categories, JGME publishes more than research articles: Perspectives, On Teaching, and Letters to the Editor are other categories for author-initiated submissions. The Instructions for Authors on the JGME website are a useful starting place for all JGME categories.¹⁸ The requirement for a GME focus holds for these articles as well. Perspectives are evidence-based opinion pieces on topics of broad interest that provide fresh new insights with practical resources and recommendations; they are not calls to action, alone. The On Teaching category is reserved for creative writing that takes the reader on a vicarious journey leading to new insights.^{19,20} Letters to the Editor must concern a recently published JGME article.

Final Thoughts

JGME is funded by a not-for-profit organization and has no fees to submit or to view articles. With 6 issues per year, we must cover a broad range of topics, specialties, and methods. This means that, rarely, we must reject a paper that would otherwise fit JGME well, due to overlap with recently published articles or those in press.

Authors should note that JGME editors do not initially read submission cover letters. JGME staff check cover letters for key information (eg, why the article is over word count). However, editors prefer to examine the work on its own merits. Abstracts—or the entire article, if a Perspective, On Teaching, or Letter to the Editor—are read without knowledge

BOX Deciding Whether to Submit to JGME

1. Does my work relate to graduate medical education (post-medical school) in ways that appear current, important, and/or useful?
 2. Is my work of potential interest to more than one specialty or subspecialty?
 3. Does the quality of my work suggest that it is ready for wider dissemination (ie, robust methods, standard approaches)?
 4. Does my work concern an evolving area in which new findings would add to or jump-start the scholarly conversation?
- If still unsure:
5. Peruse the JGME table of contents and articles. All JGME articles are open access.
 6. Review the Instructions for Authors for article category descriptions to determine if there is a category for your work.
 7. Read JGME editorials, literature synthesis articles, and Rip Outs on expected article quality and writing.

of the author's name, institution, or cover letter contents. This first pass article decision (ie, whether to move a submission on to a handling editor or to render an internal rejection) is made based on the work itself. Therefore, it is wise for authors to take great care in writing the abstract, such as following the JGME format and content and including the most important methods and results. Decisions to reject or move to external review are usually based on the abstract alone, for research articles.

I would summarize my answer to authors asking about whether their work fits JGME this way: JGME is interested in articles that will have current value to GME educators, researchers, and administrators in other settings; that move our understanding of a field forward with sufficient rigor and quality; that contain credible and transferrable findings; and that appear to fit one of JGME's categories (BOX).

I hope this information is useful and encouraging to potential authors. Do continue to send us your inquiries regarding article fit for JGME. Also, let us know how we can be more helpful in supporting your GME work.

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