

# Cover letters

**PIH Cross-site COVID-19 Writing Workshop**



# Cover letters

- Required for article submission in all journals
  - A formal letter meant to influence the decision of the editor to send your manuscript for peer review
- Highlights your most important findings
- Explains why the manuscript fits the journal you are submitting to
- Write it carefully

# Sections of a cover letter

- Parts of the letter
  - Introduction
  - Rationale for your study
  - Key findings and implications
  - Why manuscript is good fit for the journal
  - Signature
- Use a letter head for the corresponding author

# Introduction

- Address editors formally
- First paragraph: states the name of the manuscript, type of manuscript (research article, short report) and summary of what your paper does.
- Mention manuscript publication history

16 January 2015

To the Editors of the Global Health Action,

We are pleased to present to you our research paper titled “**Dental caries management in rural Rwanda: a neglected disease in Africa**”. This paper describes the presentation and management of dental caries in a rural hospital. This manuscript has neither been published nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere.

# Study rationale

- Second paragraph: describe the rationale behind your study

Dental caries is a public health problem for both developed and developing countries. Over the last few years, statistics show that there is an increasing and high prevalence of dental caries in sub-Saharan Africa. However, there is little information about who is presenting for dental care and how it is managed at rural hospitals. This is particularly an issue in Rwanda, where oral problems is the top presentation at district hospitals.



# Key findings and implications

- Third paragraph: summarize key results and implications

This article highlights gaps in dental care that we believe are experienced with other African countries beyond Rwanda. The first is that dental caries management remains poor at rural hospitals as tooth extraction occurs in over 95% of cases. Also a lack of instruments at rural hospitals to provide other care contributes to the poor management. Furthermore, most cases presented with a chronic stage leading to the recommendation of developing community oral health program that may raise awareness on the prevention measures and oral health promotion generally.



# Why did you choose that journal

- Fourth paragraph: Explain how your manuscript is a good fit for the journal and its readers
  - Focus on aspects of the journal's aims & scope, use key words from the journal that relate to your manuscript
- Also welcome comments from the editors

Given the Global Health Action's interest in research that address the global health challenges in practical ways, we think this article will be of interest to your readership. Please let me know if you have any questions and we look forward to your feedback.

# Add ons as per journal specification

- Some journals will require that you mention the following in the cover letter, see journal guidelines for the cover letter
  - The manuscript is original
  - The manuscript has not been published before, nor is it under consideration for publication at another journal
  - There are no conflicts of interest to disclose



# Sign off

- Sign in the document directly and save as pdf.

Sincerely,

Clarisse Mukashyaka  
Corresponding Author  
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer  
Partners In Health-Inshuti Mu Buzima

↻ Jen Manne-Goehler Retweeted

**Vineet Chopra** ✓  
@vineet\_chopra

...

As an editor, I can't tell you how many times I see cover letters where I just ... wonder?

The first impression is the most important one, and too many times - it's not the best impression.

How to write a compelling cover letter: a thread.

**NB: These are my views and mine only!**

12:36 PM · Jan 19, 2022 · Twitter Web App

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**Vineet Chopra** ✓  
@vineet\_chopra

...

First, make sure you have the name of the journal or editors right! It's a small detail, but details do matter here.

If I had a penny for every time the wrong editor or journal was listed....

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**Vineet Chopra** ✓  
@vineet\_chopra



Second, construct your letter to tell me precisely what I need to know at this stage of the process. This is your pitch - so pitch me well!

The letter is NOT (I repeat..NOT) your manuscript -- so don't make it one.

**Brevity, consistency, and precision - key!**

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1 Retweet 73 Likes



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@vineet\_chopra



In your first para, tell me the title of your paper, remind me if it is an original submission, and reassure me that you are submitting it to this journal only.

Also let me know if you have pre-prints or other versions out there (good to know this upfront). Yes, I do check!

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@vineet\_chopra



In the second para, tell me the "gist" of your paper. What was your question, what methods/design did you use and what were your key (no more than 1-2) findings.

This is the "money" paragraph. Make this as captivating as you can!

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In the third para, tell me why these findings should matter to the readers.

Editors think constantly about how what we publish will connect with the field, what policy aspects are relevant and what changes may come from your results.

Who better than you to state these?

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Finally, tell me whether you or your authors have any real or perceived conflicts of interest, funding or support for the paper. This helps us when we read your findings (and is very valuable to know up front).

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To be clear, your paper isn't going to live or die by your cover letter. It will be judged on its own merit.

But the cover letter does help me get to know you/your team and this submission better. That is the key goal!

This helps tremendously and shows foresight and planning.

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@vineet\_chopra



Remember, your cover letter is the first thing that is read. A well-done cover letter conveys the importance of the paper, why it belongs in the journal and what it adds to the field clearly and succinctly.

Feel free to add thoughts.

And check your covers on your next paper!

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# Questions

