



## Editorial

### Publishing Research Protocols

Ivan Neil Gomez, Editor-in-Chief

Article Received: December 31, 2020

Article Published: February 14, 2021 (online)

Copyright © 2021 Gomez. This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Over the years, scientific journals have evolved in their role from publishing research into a more proactive role of improving the state of research through supporting transparency and rigour.<sup>1</sup> The scientific community has recognized that an important step towards transparency and rigour of the research process is the reporting of research protocols.<sup>2</sup> Various databases have been established offering information on on-going research projects to inform patients and their family members, researchers, practitioners, grant funders, and the community in general (i.e., ClinicalTrials.gov, PROSPERO, Philippine Health Research Registry(PHHR)). So much so, registry of research protocols in these databases is slowly becoming standard in some countries.

A research protocol is an empirical description of a study proposal. While various authors and institutions may provide different definitions, the Philippine Journal of Allied Health Sciences (PJAHS) operationally define research protocols be a research article reporting the background, study objectives, methods, and expected results of a proposed or ongoing research.<sup>2</sup> This is a general definition that encompasses various research paradigms, approaches, and study designs aimed towards answering relevant allied health clinical and research problems. As the state of healthcare research continuously evolves, PJAHS believes that such a definition enables a classical description that can stand the test of time. Nevertheless, we recognize that at

some point in the future, this definition may change in order to adapt to the constantly evolving state of the knowledge base.

The publication of research protocols has been adopted by various local and international scientific journals. This is an important innovation in the state of scientific publication as it assists in addressing publication bias and increases the internal validity of researches. Among other things, it has also been suggested that the publication of research reports is essential in: peer review of the protocol prior to implementation, highlighting quality research studies in their early stages, reduces negative or inconvenient findings, recruitment of possible participants, aids in funding, prevention of “data fishing” through a priori data analysis plans, opens avenues for collaboration among researchers, reduces unnecessary duplication of research, facilitates subsequent publication of the completed research project, and grounding of priority research areas among others.<sup>1,3,4</sup>

It is for these reasons that PJAHS is excited to announce that starting with Volume 5, we are now opening our submission system to Research Protocols. PJAHS will consider publishing study protocols (i.e., primary studies, systematic reviews with or without meta-analysis) that have been approved by a funding agency and/or an ethics approval body. Whenever appropriate, study protocols should be registered in appropriate databases (i.e., ClinicalTrials.gov,

PROSPERO, PHRR, etc.). Study protocols are strongly recommended to follow relevant reporting guidelines (i.e., SPIRIT, SPIROS, PRSIMA-P, or consult the list by the EQUATOR Network). Study protocols without current ethics approval will not be considered. A more detailed description of the submission guidelines can be seen in our website, <https://pjahs.ust.edu.ph/submission/>.<sup>2</sup>

We recognize that this model of publishing is an experiment. There will be a need for PJAHS to learn from our own experiences, as well as from other journals in order to fine-tune a framework, editorial and peer-review process, and even a format that can best respond to the specific needs of allied health research.<sup>5-7</sup> Nonetheless, we believe that this is an important step towards improving not only the state of our journal but of scientific research in the field of allied health. Hence, from hereon, PJAHS joins the scientific community in supporting the principle of publishing peer-reviewed research protocols.

#### References:

1. Eysenbach G. Peer review and publication of research protocols and proposals: a role for open Access Journals. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*. 2004;6(3):e37. DOI: 10.2196/jmir.6.3.e37.
2. Philippine Journal of Allied Health Sciences. Guidelines for Submission (PJAHS). Submission Guideline. PJAHS; 2021. Available from: <https://pjahs.ust.edu.ph/submission/>.
3. Li T, Boutron I, Salma RA, Cobo E, Flemyng E, Grimshaw JM, Altman DG. Review and publication of protocol submissions to trials—what have we learned in 10 years? *Trials*. 2017;18(1):34. DOI: 10.1186/s13063-016-1743-0.
4. Uppstad PH, McTigue E. A rationale for publishing peer-reviewed study protocols in the Nordic Journal of Literacy Research in order to increase scientific rigour. *Nordic Journal of Literacy Research*. 2020;6(1). DOI: 10.23865/njlr.v6.2010.
5. Gomez INB. The state of the journal. *Philippine Journal of Allied Health Sciences*. 2020;3(1). DOI: 0.36413/pjahs.0301.002.
6. Gomez INB. Critical Reflection in Responding to Reviewers' Comments. *Philippine Journal of Allied Health Sciences*. 2020;3(1). DOI: 36413/pjahs.0302.001.
7. Gomez INB. In peer review we trust. *Philippine Journal of Allied Health Sciences*. 2020;4(1). DOI: 10.36413/pjahs.0401.001.