

Writing and scientific literature

The title: herald of scientific communication

BRUNO CAMELLI

Professor; Faculty Member; Director of Interdisciplinary Medical Unit of InCor, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

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In the Middle Ages, herald was the royal messenger that made all official announcements, declared war and proclaimed peace. When he appeared in public, he was the object of regard and respect. In the context of scientific journals, the title, although it is not a person, has a corresponding function. There is an abundance of texts, a great deal of new evidence, that is added daily to the medical literature. The systematic reviews, editorials, letters and comments by specialists are excellent collaborators in the task of classifying, separating and interpreting the new information that has been offered. Nevertheless, most of the effort falls to the medical reader, the one who will apply the new concept in practice. The first (and most powerful) weapon used in this selection made by readers is the title. Just like they select from newspapers and magazines the articles that deserve their attention, by analyzing the content of a scientific journal, either in electronic or print format, physicians focus on what is of their interest or what calls their attention. Journals organize their material by providing a list of the published articles on the cover or first page. It is in that space, or in the internal content, quickly leafing through the pages of the journal, that readers exercise their power of choice. In this context, the title represents the most important strategy to captivate the reader; a true herald, a modern and literary one.

The Editorial Board of Revista da Associação Médica Brasileira (RAMB) has decided to publish a series of editorials related to the subject "Writing and scientific literature" with the objective of providing some tools for readers that we believe can be useful in preparing manu-

scripts submitted to journals. In a way, they represent a view from the other side, the one of editors and reviewers who will evaluate the submitted manuscripts. **The title: herald of scientific communication** – is the first article of this series. The title of this editorial and the tips below were prepared with that purpose.

- Prefer a quick, direct and short title.
- Do not use proper nouns, such as names of individuals, cities or countries in the title, unless the text is of regional or specific interest. If it is of global interest, this approach can be important in an international journal, as reviewers tend to think that the manuscript might not interest readers from other countries.
- Try to include a keyword to help text retrieval (and future citations) by search engines.
- Do not use abbreviations in the title.
- Avoid using many sentences. Use a maximum of two sentences.
- Avoid using questions in the title (i.e. Does surgery change the natural history of the disease?).
- Try to insert your main message or concept in the title, what some call "the cherry on the cake".
- Create an easy-to-read, appealing and attractive text.
- Do not rush it, think about it for a few days and show it to your colleagues and ask for their opinion.

Good luck!