

EDITORIAL

Updating the rules for Scientific Letters and Brief Reports



Actualizando las normas de las Cartas Científicas y Comunicaciones Breves

The publishing world is highly dynamic and medical journals need to monitor current trends to ensure that their scientific content remains engaging and contemporary.

For years, *Radiología* has accepted shorter article types in addition to the longer Original research, Update in Radiology or Radiology through Images submissions. These shorter articles mostly fall under the categories of Brief Reports and Scientific Letters. These began as important contributions that, on the whole, were purely educational, reporting exceptional clinical cases. However, after analysing submissions to these sections for two years, we feel the need to clarify their purpose and modify the goals and rules for these sections. The length, number of authors, format and criteria have been updated to match current trends and requirements. [Table 1](#) sets out the main characteristics and guidelines for both article types.

The **Scientific Letters** are of great interest from a teaching perspective. They highlight the didactic and educational value of a clinical imaging case, the extreme rarity of a disease, or an unusual manifestation of a more common disease.

And yet, rarity alone is not a sufficient criterion if the case adds nothing new to the literature.¹

In the submission letter, authors should defend the teaching value of their manuscript or its originality.

While these articles are brief, writing a Scientific Letter and transmitting the desired message is no simple task. Before starting to draft a document, authors should select their case and carry out an exhaustive review of the literature on the topic. Then, they should identify the message they want to communicate.

Table 1 Main characteristics and guidelines for preparing Scientific Letters and Brief Reports.

	Scientific Letter	Brief Report
Content	Teaching and educational value	Small sample size (<10 patients), researching a rare disease, or an innovative interventional radiology management/treatment.
	Extremely rare disease	Preliminary studies of an original research project that have obtained initial results that indicate the need to carry out further research
	Unusual manifestation in a more common disease	
Submission letter	Yes	Yes
Key words	No	Yes (3–10, MeSH terms)
Abstract	No	Yes
Authors	3	5
Length	800	1200
Figures	2	3
References:	5	10

The manuscript should be brief, concise and clear. It should answer the following questions: what is new, original or educational about this case; why is it important and clinically relevant for the reader; and what are the teaching points? To accomplish this, the Scientific Letter should follow the following structure:

Introduction: A brief overview of the problem addressed by the case (giving the reader context), ending with a brief summary (one to three sentences) that describe the patient and disease.²

Case presentation:³ Demographic characteristics (age, sex), medical and surgical background, clinical presentation and symptoms, physical exploration, diagnostic tests, test results, management (treatment), evolution and follow-up.

Discussion: Beginning with a paragraph that elaborates on the introduction, this section should highlight its teaching value or originality and focus on why the case is worth mentioning and what problem it addresses.

The author should then review and compare the pathology with the existing literature. The manuscript should briefly conclude with the most important ideas concerning the pathology and highlight the teaching message and originality that the case offers.^{2,3}

Brief Reports are similar to original articles, but they describe results that come from early rounds of research and therefore usually involve smaller cohorts. The methodology section is short and the message is concise.

Radiología will consider the following types of articles but will limit the number of articles it accepts in this category:

Small sample sizes (less than those considered in an original article [10 patients]) that feature a rare disease or that employ an innovative interventional radiology treatment or management.

Preliminary studies of an original research project which use a simple statistical study/design or a small sample size, and which have obtained results that indicate the need to carry out further research.

The structure will be the same as that of an original article,⁴ but shorter (Abstract, Introduction, Material and methods, Results and Discussion). This type of manuscript should also be accompanied by a submission letter from the authors.

In conclusion, while Scientific Letters and Brief Reports are shorter articles, they have significant potential due to their didactic value and can transmit exceptional or innovative messages or prompt future research. *Radiología* encourages authors to dedicate the time and attention required to prepare these types of manuscripts, abiding by the journal's guidelines.

Funding

This research has not received any funding.

Author contributions

- 1 Research coordinators: ESA.
- 2 Study concept: ESA.
- 3 Study design: ESA.
- 4 Data collection: ESA.
- 5 Data analysis and interpretation: N/A.
- 6 Data processing: N/A.
- 7 Literature search: N/A.
- 8 Drafting of article: ESA.
- 9 Critical review of the manuscript with intellectually relevant contributions: ESA.
- 10 Approval of the final version: ESA.

Funding

This research was not supported by any grant.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

References

1. García Santos JM. ¿Queremos publicar comunicaciones breves? *Radiología*. 2014;56:191–2.
2. Guidelines to writing a clinical case report. *Heart Views*. 2017;18:104–5.
3. Riley DS, Barber MS, Kienle GS, Aronson JK, von Schoen-Angerer T, Tugwell P, et al. CARE guidelines for case reports: explanation and elaboration document. *J Clin Epidemiol*. 2017;89:218–35.
4. García Santos JM. Cómo escribir un artículo original para una revista biomédica. *Radiología*. 2011;53:209–19.

E. Serrano*

Centro de Diagnóstico por la Imagen, Sección de Radiología vascular intervencionista, Hospital Universitario de Bellvitge, Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Spain

*Corresponding author.

E-mail address: elena.serrano.1991@gmail.com