



Publishing Research Study Protocols

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Several months ago, the *Philippine Journal of Physical Therapy* (PhJPT) editorial team approved the inclusion of research study protocols as a publishable manuscript category in PhJPT. Readers will see study protocols published in our journal starting with this issue. Currently, PhJPT will consider research protocols of any study design, however the journal requires ethics approval of the protocol to be considered for review. Additional guidelines regarding submission of research protocols can be found in the PhJPT website.

What exactly are research study protocols? This type of scholarly work provides documentation of an investigator's detailed research plan, and allows the study authors to clearly articulate the study's rationale, methods, and plan for statistical analyses (Godlee, 2001). Study protocols are also known as "research proposals" which may be a more common term for readers who have taken a research methods class. An increasing number of scientific journals are publishing research study protocols, including those that publish literature related to rehabilitation and physical therapy practice (Ohtake & Childs, 2014).

So why publish study protocols? There are several justifications for publishing such papers. In the Philippine setting, one of the most important reasons is to inform the physical therapy community of research that is currently being conducted. This could apprise the entire readership of the ongoing priorities that affect clinical and academic practice in the Philippines. Awareness of what is currently being investigated will provide the opportunity for investigators to collaborate on scholarly work and avoid unnecessary duplication of studies (Eysenbach, 2004; Godlee, 2001) or to identify possible research areas of collaboration between researchers or organizations, further enriching the breadth and depth of the eventual scholarly products (Allen et al., 2014).

Another important reason for disseminating research study proposals is the potential to provide further peer review of the research plans before the investigator implements the study (Jesus & Colquhoun, 2018). Providing blinded feedback to a research proposal could lead to changes in the study's methodology before implementation. While publication of a paper is primarily dependent on the overall quality of the study and the write-up, the extra step of publishing a research protocol may help in the eventual publication of the full study because the study methodology has already undergone peer review (*Why Should I Publish My Protocol or Grant Proposal?*, n.d.). Once the protocol is published, the scientific community could provide further comment on the protocol to allow the investigators to further fine tune their methods prior to implementation. The end result is the potential to further control for bias, and improve the validity, and generalizability of the study.

Publishing research study protocols in PhJPT provides a venue for research-related products produced by students and faculty in academic programs to be disseminated to a much bigger audience. The opportunity to review and provide feedback on those research endeavors could potentially improve the quality of research being performed in the educational institutions.

Lastly, the readership will benefit from a deeper understanding of the steps involved in conducting a research study from reading these papers, allowing them to be better consumers of the research literature. The entire physical therapy community benefits from gaining knowledge and skills generated by this process to assist in moving our professional practice in a positive direction.

We at PhJPT believe that reviewing and publishing study protocols support our aim of improving patient care “through the elevation of physical therapist education and practice.” For the next few issues of the journal, we anticipate publishing research study protocols to show the diversity of topics currently being investigated in the Philippine setting. In addition to publishing these papers, PhJPT intends to translate the knowledge by discussing these proposals in other mediums such as podcasts or continuing education offerings to further strengthen the link between theory and practice.

Moving forward, PhJPT intends to regularly devote part of an issue to publishing research study protocols. PhJPT anticipates the quality of these scholarly products to improve and will strive to highlight study protocols that are well-designed, novel, and impactful to our profession.

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