

Sorry! This presentation contained sensitive and confidential material that could not be fully presented on our web page. An excerpt can be found below but the rest is available to former, current, and future lab members on request.

Take home messages

With you:

Interactions with editors and reviewers are important but the quality of the work is THE most important. You have to believe in the work.

Make outlines and submit early! I can help with significance. You may think you know what your story needs but 9 times out of 10 it is different than what the reviewers think your story needs. Guess whose opinion counts?

A modification of the Russ Carstens rule for why you should not study for tests in medical school:

.... If you go in early and it is accepted, great – you are a genius.

.... If you go in early and more work needs to be done, well what did you expect, you went in early. At least you know which experiments need to be done so the goal is defined and you can be confident that you are working toward it with each experiment.

.... If you go in early and it is rejected, don't feel bad...you went in early. You have lost very little. The effort you have spent trying to formulate what you have into a story will be useful for guiding you in any case and what you have done will almost certainly be used in the version that is eventually submitted and published.

If you submit, you get your reviews, and there is an opening for resubmission...

Drop everything and bust your butt. It is critical to maintain momentum. Do not go on vacation. Do not get involved with other projects. Do not go to Spain. Recruit collaborators if you can. The deadline for resubmission will approach faster than you can imagine.

With editors:

Be as direct and concise as possible.

If you can explain the significance of your work with one dollar words or ten dollar words, choose one dollar words every time.

Don't whine. Everybody feels like they have been treated unfairly. Try to base your appeals on dry, dispassionate facts.

Ask for new reviewers as an absolute last resort.

With reviewers:

Assume the best about them and the worst about you. Blame yourself for your poor communication skills, genuinely think about ways to fix the problem, and try again.

If you made a mistake and they caught it, do not try to gloss over it. Humble yourself, admit your error, apologize, and fix it.

Be direct. Don't waste their time.

Be gracious and gentle. Everybody makes mistakes. There but for the grace of God...

Be self-critical. If they think that you are more skeptical than they are (and I think as a lab we are), they are more willing to trust you.

Be exhaustive.