

## **WRITING AN INVITED COMMENTARY**

**Wilfred C.G. Peh**  
**MBBS, MHSM, MD, FRCPG, FRCPE, FRCR**  
**Editor, Singapore Medical Journal**  
**Clinical Professor, National University of Singapore**  
**Senior Consultant and Head, Department of Diagnostic Radiology,**  
**Alexandra Hospital, Singapore**  
**Email: [wilfred.peh@gmail.com](mailto:wilfred.peh@gmail.com)**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Invited Commentaries are often confused with Review Articles. The invited commentary is a short article that describes an author's personal experience of a specific topic. The subject may be controversial and the author's perspective is provided. This type of paper should outline the various viewpoints that exist.

### **WHO WRITES A COMMENTARY?**

Commentaries are usually invited by the editor, and are hence also known as Invited Commentaries. Only those considered to be an expert on the subject would be so invited. Hence, being invited to write a commentary is a great honour. However, being able to write a good commentary is difficult, and both experience and finesse are required. The invited commentator is expected to provide insight on a particular topic to the readership.

### **STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS**

An invited commentary may be based on a current hot topic or may be commissioned to accompany an original paper on the same topic. Commentaries should consist of the following headings: unstructured (or no) abstract, introduction and subheadings. The number of references and illustrations should be limited to support the author's opinion.

A current hot topic may be on a subject that is important or one that is controversial as to require contrary or further views. The invited commentator is then expected to give a balanced overview on the subject and to discuss the different aspects and relevance. The invited commentator should also be aware of the journal readership and tailor his commentary accordingly.

If the commentary is regarding an original paper published in the journal, it is incumbent on the invited commentator to be intimately familiar with

the article and its references. If the paper projects a controversial view, then the commentary should aim to give an opposite balance so that less familiar with the subject at hand are presented with both sides of the argument.

In writing an invited commentary, there is potential for differences in opinion, expertise, or experience. If there is controversy and debate on the subject of the review, commentators should not be afraid to express their personal views and opinions based on experience. It is also legitimate to provoke debate, if appropriate, where there is uncertainty. The commentator should however be particularly careful, especially if he or she does not agree with the paper being commented on.

### **SUMMARY**

A well written commentary is short and clear. It should provide a balanced view to a current hot topic, or add balance to another paper being commented upon.