Revista Angolana de Ciências

Vol. 8, Nº 1. e080105. Janeiro – Junho, 2026
(Publicação em Fluxo Contínuo)

Editorial communication and peer review: an analysis from the authors' perspective

Comunicación editorial y revisión por pares: análisis desde los autores

Comunicação editorial e revisão por pares: uma análise sob a perspectiva dos autores

Martha María Ávila Rodríguez[1]
María de Jesús Pérez Herrera[2]

ABSTRACT

Communication between authors, editors, and reviewers is essential in the editorial process. The objective of this article is to analyse the opinions of authors published in the journal *Mediciego* regarding communication during the publication process. A quantitative, exploratory study was conducted using a questionnaire (Google Forms), the link to which was sent to authors via the journal's platform and remained online for ten days. The sample, determined by convenience sampling, consisted of the available subjects: 59 Cuban and international authors who responded voluntarily and anonymously. The data were processed using the same tool. The availability of information for authors was acknowledged. The speed and flexibility of communication showed the highest percentage of dissatisfaction. The review and publication process did not adhere to the established deadlines (13.5%), although it contributed to acquiring new knowledge and improving the quality of the article; the evaluation was demanding and fair; 5.1% considered the reviewers' reasoning insufficient. 68% rated the communication as excellent. The respondents suggested: using other communication channels besides email (2), faster responses (2), more efficient peer review (2), interaction among authors (1), and fairer treatment of topics of public health interest (1). It was concluded that Mediciego's communication with its authors is predominantly satisfactory, although improvements are needed in communication speed and adherence to the stated deadlines.

Keywords: authors; scientific communication; editors.

RECEIVED: 21 October, 2025
ACCEPTED: 15 March, 2026
PUBLISHED: 15 April. 2026

How to cite: Ávila, M.M. y Pérez, M.d.J. (2026). Editorial Communication and Peer Review: An Analysis from the Authors' Perspective. *RAC: Revista Angolana de Ciências*, 8(1), e080105. https://doi.org/10.54580/R0801.05

E-ISSN. 2664-259X

1. Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Ciego de Ávila. Ciego de Ávila, Cuba.
maravilar59@gmail.com / https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4436-3933
2. Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Ciego de Ávila. Ciego de Ávila, Cuba.
mariacav0204@gmail.com / https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0118-2136

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Resumen

La comunicación entre autores, editores y revisores es esencial en el proceso editorial. El objetivo del artículo es analizar los criterios de autores publicados en la revista *Mediciego* sobre la comunicación durante el proceso de publicación. Se realizó un estudio cuantitativo, exploratorio; se aplicó un cuestionario (google forms), cuyo enlace se envió a los autores por la plataforma de la revista; se mantuvo en línea durante diez días. La muestra, determinada por criterio de conveniencia, se conformó con los sujetos disponibles: 59 autores cubanos y extranjeros que respondieron de manera voluntaria y anónima. Los datos fueron procesados por la propia herramienta. Se reconoció la disponibilidad de la información para autores. La agilidad y flexibilidad de la comunicación mostraron mayor porcentaje de insatisfacción. El proceso de revisión y publicación no se ajustó a los plazos establecidos (13,5%), aunque contribuyó a la adquisición de nuevos aprendizajes y al mejoramiento de la calidad del artículo; la evaluación fue exigente y justa; 5,1% consideró insuficiente la argumentación de los revisores. 68% valoró la comunicación de excelente. Los encuestados sugirieron: utilizar otras vías de comunicación además del email (2), respuestas más agiles (2), agilidad en el arbitraje (2), la interacción entre autores (1) y ser más justos con los temas que son de interés en salud pública (1). Se concluyó que la comunicación de *Mediciego* con sus autores es predominantemente satisfactoria, aunque hay que mejorar en la agilidad de la comunicación y el ajuste de la revisión a los plazos declarados.

Palabras clave: autores; comunicación científica; editores.

Resumo

A comunicação entre autores, editores e revisores é essencial no processo editorial. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar as opiniões de autores publicados na revista *Mediciego* a respeito da comunicação durante o processo de publicação. Foi realizado um estudo quantitativo e exploratório utilizando um questionário (google forms), cujo link foi enviado aos autores por meio da plataforma da revista e permaneceu online por dez dias. A amostra, determinada por conveniência, foi composta pelos sujeitos disponíveis: 59 autores cubanos e internacionais que responderam voluntariamente e anonimamente. Os dados foram processados utilizando a mesma ferramenta. A disponibilidade de informações para os autores foi reconhecida. A velocidade e a flexibilidade da comunicação apresentaram o maior percentual de insatisfação. O processo de revisão e publicação não cumpriu os prazos estabelecidos (13,5%), embora tenha contribuído para a aquisição de novos conhecimentos e para a melhoria da qualidade do artigo; a avaliação foi exigente e justa; 5,1% consideraram o raciocínio dos revisores insuficiente. 68% avaliaram a comunicação como excelente. Os respondentes sugeriram: utilização de outros canais de comunicação além do e-mail (2), respostas mais rápidas (2), revisão por pares mais eficiente (2), interação entre os autores (1) e tratamento mais justo de temas de interesse para a saúde pública (1). Concluiu-se que a comunicação da *Mediciego* com seus autores é predominantemente satisfatória, embora sejam necessárias melhorias na velocidade de comunicação e no cumprimento dos prazos estabelecidos.

Palavras-chave: autores; comunicação científica; editores

Introduction

Mediciego is a scientific, peer-reviewed, open-access journal, sponsored by the University of Medical Sciences of Ciego de Ávila, Cuba. It publishes scientific results related to human health and the training of human resources for the health sector. Since its creation in 1995, it has published punctually and in accordance with its declared periodicity. Despite its extensive trajectory, no previous studies exist on the criteria of its users, a significant gap to which this first investigative approach responds.

Communication, in the context of the editorial process of scientific journals, possesses notorious interest as an object of study, as may be inferred from the multiple facets of publications addressing the topic (Troncoso-Pantoja et al., 2023; Harringhton-Martínez and Martínez-Padrón, 2023; Reyes Rodríguez, 2023; Viera-Savigne et al., 2024; Buitrago-Ciro et al., 2025).

Many publications focus on the peer review process, the gold standard in scientific communication through which collegiality in the review of articles is verified, one of the trends of open science (Aguado-López and Becerril-García, 2021; Montiel-Espinosa, 2023; Dussel and Acevedo, 2024).

The topic has also been addressed amongst the criteria for evaluating the quality of scientific journals, specifically as an expression of the quality of editorial management (Parra-Suárez et al., 2020; Merlo-Vega and Montoya-Roncancio, 2023; Candal-Pedreira et al., 2023), and in studies of user satisfaction and good editorial practices (Petersson-Roldán et al., 2025; Sepúlveda-Vildósola et al., 2023).

There exist studies that address the communication process from the challenges of open science (Zayas-Mujica, 2025; Montiel-Espinosa, 2024), which implies promoting access to research data, to the different versions of the article during the publication process and not only to the final product, the use of preprints, open peer review, the possibilities of interoperability between digital objects, amongst other aspects. The majority of these studies focus on the article review process.

Amongst the basic characteristics that as quality criteria are demanded by the indexing databases (Latindex, DOAJ, Redalyc, SciELO, Scopus, and WoS), are those that guarantee facilities for communication between the users of the publication and its managers. For this reason, the online availability of information concerning the members of the editorial committee or board (including the institutional affiliations of all members), contact details that include a real name and the journal's email address, is required. Likewise, the indexing databases demand that scientific journals declare in their editorial policies the presentation criteria of the journal, the requirements for author identification, the services of interactivity with readers, the adoption of open science practices, elements that evidence the importance of communication between the editorial teams and the users, with emphasis on the authors.

Communication in the editorial management process of scientific journals is a topic of current interest and vitality in the field of research, both for the information sciences and for the communication sciences. However, in the antecedents of the topic, the analysis concentrates mainly on the stages and technology of the process, on the demands of editorial policies, and on the quality of the article. The subjects participating in editorial management (authors, editors, and reviewers) are recognised, but the communication amongst them remains at an implicit level, or is addressed tangentially. On the other hand, the recognised terminological diversity (García-Rodríguez et al., 2024) reveals conceptual plurality in relation to what may be considered scientific communication.

In this sense, it is shared that scientific communication is a set of processes of exchange of scientific information (Jorge-Fernández, 2007), thus including interpersonal communication, a common element in all the perspectives of analysis previously referred to. Subject-to-subject communication is the basis of the editorial management process, guarantor of compliance with editorial policies, of alignment with the Open Science movement, of rigour, and of agility in the communication of science.

From this perspective, the article is focused whose purpose is to analyse the criteria of authors published in *Mediciego* regarding communication with editors and reviewers during the publication process.

Methods

A quantitative, exploratory study was conducted because no previous information existed about the topic in the specific case of *Mediciego*. An online questionnaire was applied with five questions with different response options for single selection and one open question. The link to the form was sent to authors via the journal's platform; it remained online for ten days (between the 3rd and the 13th of September, 2025).

The questions were elaborated based on the theory consulted regarding author satisfaction and editorial quality. Emphasis was placed on the search for criteria regarding the availability of information for authors, the characteristics of communication with editors and reviewers, peculiarities of the review and publication process related to communication, and the disposition to publish again in *Mediciego*. Likewise, criteria were gathered regarding aspects of communication with authors that could be improved. A Likert-type scale was used (strongly agree, agree, disagree).

The population consisted of 1,253 authors registered in the journal to whom the link to the form was sent. The sample was determined by convenience sampling, based on the subjects available: those who responded voluntarily and anonymously. The data were processed by the same tool via Google Forms and analysed in accordance with the purpose of the study.

Results

Fifty-nine persons were surveyed: 28 women and 31 men; 47 Cuban authors (79.6%), of whom 29 were from Ciego de Ávila (47%), and 12 foreign authors (20.3%). Of the total, 29 (49.2%) had published once in *Mediciego*; 14 (23.7%) had published twice, and 16 (27.1%) had three or more publications in the journal.

To obtain responses to the research question, criteria were gathered regarding the following topics:

a. Availability of information for authors.
b. Characteristics of communication with editors and reviewers.
c. Criteria regarding the review and publication process.
d. General evaluation of communication with the journal.

Possibility of submitting manuscripts to *Mediciego* again.

e. Aspects of communication with authors that could be improved

The criteria of the respondents regarding the availability of information for authors considered sufficiency, precision, and accessibility, and revealed the following:

a. The guidelines for authors are sufficient and guiding: 72.8% responded strongly agree; 25.4% responded agree, and 1.7% disagree.
b. The complementary documents are precise: strongly agree, 67.8%; agree, 28.8%; and disagree, 1.7%.
c. The information is easily accessible: 64.4% responded strongly agree; 33.9% responded agree, and 1.7% disagree.

The general characteristics of communication with editors and reviewers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Criteria regarding the characteristics of communication with editors and reviewers

ITEM		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE
a)	Agile	59,3%	35,6%	5,1%
b)	Relevant	59,3%	38,9%	1,7%
c)	Respectful	71,2%	28,9%	0%
d)	Flexible	57,6%	37,3%	5,1%
e)	Systematic	71,2%	27,1%	1,7%

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the research results.

In Table 2, the respondents' criteria regarding communication in the review and publication process are shown.

Table 2.
Criteria regarding the review and publication process

ITEM		STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE
a)	It adhered to the deadlines declared in the journal's policy	45,8%	40,7%	13,5%
b)	It generated anxiety, tension, annoyance, or other negative emotion	20,3%	32,2%	47,5%
c)	It contributed to the acquisition of new learning and experiences	64,4%	35,6%	0%
d)	It contributed to the improvement of the article's quality	64,4%	33,9%	1,7%
e)	The evaluation was demanding and fair	61%	37,3%	1,7%
f)	The reviewers' criteria were duly reasoned	54,2%	40,7%	5,1%

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the research results.

The general evaluation of communication with the editors and reviewers of *Mediciego* according to personal experience behaved as appears in Figure 1.

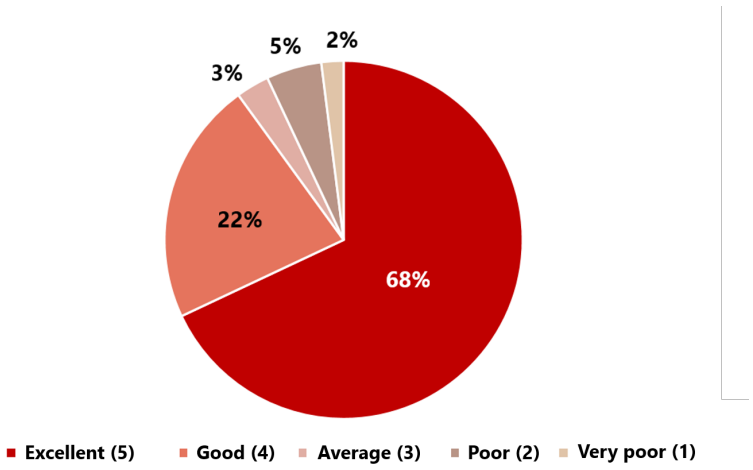

Figure 1.
Evaluation of communication with the editors and reviewers of *Mediciego* according to experience
Source: Authors' elaboration based on the research results.

The criteria regarding the possibility of submitting manuscripts to the journal *Mediciego* again were the following: 55 authors (93.2%) responded affirmatively; one (1.7%) responded no, and three (5.1%) responded I don't know. Amongst the criteria linked to the refusal to send contributions, the following was raised: "it seems there is endogamy in the articles and those of Cuban nationality are prioritised," a criterion that adjusts to the reality of this indicator in the journal before 2024.

Other criteria not related to the refusal to send contributions to the journal were provided:

My response was that I would publish in *Mediciego* again, but one of the rules of *Mediciego* is that the same author cannot publish more than three articles per year; I disagree since this is a rule that does not apply to the majority of Cuban journals, which practically obliges systematic authors to seek other journals to publish in.

- I cannot know in advance; it depends on the quality of my work.

Regarding the aspects of communication with authors that could be improved, the following was raised

- Use other communication channels that are not only email: 2 (3.4%)
- Be more agile when responding: 2 (3.4%)
- Agility in the peer review processes: 2 (3.4%)
- Interaction among authors: 1 (1.7%)
- Be fairer with topics that are of interest in public health: 1 (1.7%)

The collected data provide primary information about communication with editors and reviewers during the publication process in the journal *Mediciego*. Amongst the main findings are: those related to the availability of information for authors, adherence to the deadlines declared in the journal's policies, and the reasoning of the reviewers' criteria.

Discussion

The analysis of the results in relation to the consulted scientific literature is conditioned by the insufficient quantity of studies found that were based on the criteria of published authors, which prevents the comparison of quantitative results between this and other investigations.

The literature review resulted from the location of 44 articles published in journals indexed in SciELO and DOAJ, using the keywords: arbitration, authors, communication, scientific communication, quality criteria, editorial decisions, editorial, editors, editorial process, peer review, scientific journals, and user satisfaction; 13 articles were dismissed for addressing facets not directly related to the purpose of the research. Of the remaining 31 articles, 25 address the topic from a theoretical point of view: reviews, position articles, documentary analysis, editorials. Only five of them focus directly on communication with authors, and of these two use the authors' criteria as a source for the analysis of editorial communication.

The gathered criteria—as a trend, favourable—provide significant information for the feedback of the editorial team, entail implications for improving the quality of editorial management, and are in consonance with the scientific literature:

> It is important to know how users perceive the quality of a service or product. Then, what are the dimensions of the quality of users/of a scientific publication/? In general, they are reliability, tangibles, promptness of response, security, accessibility, and empathy. (Miyahira-Arakaki, 2008, p. 1).

The availability of information for authors is perceived in a predominantly favourable manner by the respondents. Communication with editors and reviewers is recognised as respectful and systematic; these are the most accepted characteristics, whilst agility, relevance, and flexibility are the most questioned by the surveyed authors. Regarding this, the contradiction between the acceptance of the systematic nature of communication (71% strongly agree) versus only 45.8% who strongly agree with the adherence of the review to the deadlines declared in the journal's policy calls attention.

The appreciations regarding the review and publication process and its adherence to the deadlines declared in the journal's policies were expected. In the practice of the editorial process of the journal *Mediciego*, the first communication from the editor with the author is agile, but the review by the reviewers in many cases extends beyond the planned deadlines. This coincides with the situation recognised in the published literature:

> One of the tensions in the current system of scientific communication is the delay between the submission of articles and their publication; that is, the possibility of reading, reviewing, and interpellation by the scientific communities. (Aguado-López and Becerril-García, 2021, p. 58).

A certain margin of disagreement amongst the respondents is also appreciated regarding the due reasoning of the reviewers' criteria. This aspect in particular implies for the editorial team of *Mediciego* the need to deepen the analysis of the reviewers' work, thus opening a new perspective of study: the analysis of the reports, the suggestions for modifications, and the reflection on the authors' counterarguments, in order to deepen the sufficiency and communicative effectiveness during the editorial process.

The above is essential, above all in the case that the submission is not accepted (the preferable expression to "rejected," of frequent use in this context). In this regard, it is aptly stated:

> Rejection is merely one amongst several possibilities in evaluation verdicts (being even the most frequent), which passes through the need for the works presented to be in the best possible conditions; it is no less true that the scientific communication of an informed rejection decision, in a timely and respectful manner by the reviewers and editors, will do much to help consolidate a novice researcher who initiates a path in the realm of science. (Reyes-Rodríguez and Pinto-Poblete, 2024, p. 822).

The knowledge of the authors regarding the work of medical journal reviewers allows one to subscribe to the criterion that "as the reviewers are active professional practitioners, they are sometimes overloaded with care, teaching, and research activities, for which reason they do not always have the necessary time for the evaluations" (Vidal-Ledo, 2020, p. 3). The problem is recurrent:

> Journal editors complain that it is increasingly difficult to find reviewers: the fact that it is invisible and unpaid work makes it unattractive to those who are more established in their disciplinary fields. (Dussel and Acevedo, 2024, p. 123).

The criteria of the respondents seem to support the idea that with review, "the articles are significantly more solid and clear than their original versions" (Alfonso-Machado, 2024, p. 18). The idea that the review process contributes to the acquisition of new learning and experiences, the improvement of the article's quality, and the quality of the evaluation is accepted; a result coherent with what is found in the scientific literature:

> The exchange that we achieve, with the mediation of the Editorial Team, between authors and reviewers, allows the strengthening of manuscripts with the external and specialist gaze of the field, regardless of whether they result accepted or not. Even when a manuscript is rejected from the pre-review (...) the experience must be considered a moment of learning. (Montiel-Espinosa, 2023, p. 6).

In a general sense, communication with the editors and reviewers of *Mediciego* is valued positively according to the personal experience of the published authors (Figure 1), which corresponds with the responses to the rest of the questionnaire questions.

Regarding the possibility of publishing in Mediciego again, the quantitative data are favourable, but the arguments provided by the respondents were very few and not all adjust to the purpose of the survey.

Amongst the aspects of communication with authors that could be improved, the following are considered apt: "use other communication channels that are not only email," a criterion that the authors consider somewhat absolute, but attendable; "be more agile when responding," "agility in the peer review processes." These complaints about agility in communication agree with the responses to other questions of the questionnaire and are in consonance with what occurs in the regional context, where the peer review time is increasing and is considered "an obstacle to scientific communication insofar as it negatively impacts the pertinent publication of scientific contributions" (Aguado-López and Becerril-García, 2021, pp. 61-62). The criteria are indicating the urgency of reviewing this problem in order to detect and avoid what is considered an ethical fault in the editor's work: undue delay in decision-making and in communication to the authors (Camadro, 2023).

Petersson-Roldán et al. (2025), in a study of author satisfaction of the Revista Médica Electrónica, investigated via open questions how the review process could be improved and found criteria such as the following, coincident with those found in this study: "reduce the review time without losing quality"; "clearer explanations regarding the reasons for acceptance, rejection, or request for corrections"; they also found the suggestion to make "greater use of email for coordination" (p. 8), a criterion that differs from what was found in the present investigation.

The best practices of editorial management reveal systematicity in communication throughout the entire process: from when the manuscript is received at the journal, a dialogue is established with the author, at first with the executive editor, then the associate editors and reviewers are incorporated, who exchange amongst themselves and with the author in the different rounds of evaluation. Finally, the manuscript is sent to the author for the approval of eventual stylistic changes and the final version (Correia-Alves et al., 2022).

Candal-Pedreira et al. (2023) highlight that the quality of the editorial process resides in the people who form part of it: scientific authors or researchers, editors, and reviewers, whose experience and knowledge to ensure the quality of the published articles are essential, as much as the fluid communication of the authors with the journal.

In the context of the editorial management of scientific journals, communication between the participating subjects is medullary:

> Just as occurs in an electrical circuit, when there is a communicative failure, an alteration occurs in the circuit and the same is broken, affecting the supply of energy. Here, effective, timely, and respectful communication keeps the editorial process in motion. (Reyes-Rodríguez and Pinto-Poblete, 2024, p. 809)

It is shared that scientific communication may exist in a laboratory report, in an email, in a conversation between researchers, or in a high-divulgation journal and in different scenarios (Marcos, 2015). Traditionally, scientific

communication is explained as divulgation or as diffusion of a scientific knowledge or result. From the terminological point of view, the heterogeneity of expressions employed to allude to scientific communication constitutes a current barrier: popularisation, divulgation, science communication, social appropriation of science, development of scientific culture, science journalism, diffusion, promotion (García-Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Communication with authors is, essentially, scientific communication by its content, form, style, intention, purpose, procedural character, and above all by its connotation regarding the processes of diffusion and divulgation; thus it becomes an input for quality: without authors, editors, and reviewers, scientific communication would not exist (Reyes-Rodríguez and Pinto-Poblete, 2024).

The study, as a first approach to the topic, provides significant information for the editorial team of *Mediciego*; it establishes an initial reference point in the history of this publication whose follow-up aligns with the current criteria associated with open science practices and editorial transparency. It is considered valuable for addressing scientific communication using the authors' criteria, which is not frequent in the treatment of the topic in the consulted literature.

Nevertheless, limitations are identified: the sample is reduced with respect to the totality of authors published in the journal. The possibility that those who have not had good editorial experiences in *Mediciego* did not feel committed to the call to respond to the survey, and that it was responded to by those who did have a satisfactory experience, is real and implies the risk of bias in the study. Despite the exploratory character of the study, other criteria should have been assumed for the selection of a sample resulting from an intentional call: authors of articles subjected to a second round of evaluation, authors of non-accepted articles, authors of articles that exceeded the agreed publication deadline.

Consequently, the continuity of the study is considered possible with a broader and more representative sample selection, via the investigation of the reviewers' criteria on the topic, the content analysis of the reports, and of the traces of communication in the journal's OJS platform.

Conclusions

- It was ascertained that the authors published in *Mediciego* hold satisfactory criteria regarding communication with editors and reviewers. The main insufficiencies relate to the agility of responses, the adherence of the review and publication process to the deadlines declared in the journal's policies, and the reasoning of the reviewers' criteria.
- These dissatisfactions of the authors must be attended to with professionalism and adherence to the fundamentals of scientific communication and good editorial practices; otherwise, they may induce the loss of confidence in the journal, the decrease of the flow of submitted articles, and in general, the affectation of the quality of the editorial process and the prestige of the publication.

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