

Qualitative Health Research

Impact Factor: 2.4

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Submission guidelines



Submit manuscript

Please read the guidelines in full before submitting your manuscript. Manuscripts not conforming to these guidelines may be returned.

Submit Manuscript 

Manuscript submission guidelines:

Qualitative Health Research (QHR) has specific guidelines! While [Sage Publishing has general guidelines](#), all manuscripts submitted to *QHR* must follow our specific guidelines (found below). Once you have reviewed these guidelines, please visit *QHR*'s [submission site](#) to upload your manuscript. Please note that manuscripts not conforming to these guidelines will be returned and/or encounter delays in peer review. Remember you can log in to the submission site at any time to check on the progress of your manuscript throughout the peer review process.

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1. Deciding whether to submit a manuscript to *QHR*

 Aims & scope

QHR provides an international, interdisciplinary forum to enhance health and health care and further the development and understanding of qualitative health research. The journal is an invaluable resource for researchers and academics, administrators and others in the health and social service professions, and graduates, who seek examples of studies in which the authors used qualitative methodologies. Each issue of *QHR* provides readers with a wealth of information on conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and ethical issues pertaining to qualitative inquiry.

Rather than send query letters to the Editor regarding article fit, *QHR* asks authors to make their own decision regarding the suitability of their manuscript for *QHR* by asking: Does your proposed submission make a meaningful and strong contribution to qualitative health research literature? Is it useful to readers and/or practitioners?

1.2 Article types

The following manuscript types are considered for publication.

- Original Research Studies: These are fully developed qualitative research studies. This may include mixed method studies in which the major focus/portion of the study is qualitative research. Please read [Maintaining the Integrity of Qualitatively Driven Mixed Methods: Avoiding the “This Work is Part of a Larger Study” Syndrome](#).
- Pearls, Piths, and Provocations: These manuscripts should foster discussion and debate about significant issues, enhance communication of methodological advances, promote and discuss issues related to the teaching of qualitative approaches in health contexts, and/or encourage the discussion of new and/or provocative ideas. They should also make clear what the manuscript adds to the existing body of knowledge in the area.
- Editorials: These are generally invited articles written by editors/editorial board members associated with *QHR*.

Please note, *QHR* does NOT publish pilot studies. We do not normally publish reviews unless they focus on qualitative research studies elaborating methodological issues and developments. Review articles should be submitted to the Pearls, Piths, and Provocations section. They are reviewed according to criteria in 2.2.

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2. Review criteria

2.1 Original research

Reviewers are asked to consider the following areas and questions when making recommendations about research manuscripts:

- **Importance of submission: Does the manuscript make a significant contribution to qualitative health research literature?** Is it original? Relevant? In depth? Insightful? Is it useful to the reader and/or practitioner?
- **Methodological considerations:** Is the overall study design clearly explained including why this design was an appropriate one? Are the methodology/methods/approaches used in keeping with that design? Are they appropriate given the research question and/or aims? Are they logically articulated? Clarity in design and presentation? Data adequacy and appropriateness? Evidence of rigor?
- **Ethical Concerns:** Are relevant ethical concerns discussed and acknowledged? Is enough detail given to enable the reader to understand how ethical issues were navigated? Has formal IRB approval (when needed) and consent from participants been obtained?
- **Data analysis, findings, discussion:** Does the analysis of data reflect depth and coherence? In-depth descriptive but also interpretive dimensions? Creative and insightful analysis? Are results linked to existing literature and theory, as appropriate? Is the contribution of the research clear including its relevance to health disciplines and their practice?
- **Manuscript style and format:** Is the manuscript organized in a clear and concise manner? Has sufficient attention been paid to word choice, spelling, grammar, and so forth? Did the author adhere to APA guidelines? Do diagrams/illustrations comply with guidelines? Is the overall manuscript aligned with *QHR* guidelines in relation to formatting?
- **Scope:** Does the article fit with *QHR*'s publication mandate? Has the author cited the major work in the area, including those published in *QHR*?

2.2 Pearls, Piths, and Provocations

The purpose of papers in this section is to raise and discuss issues pertinent to the development and advancement of qualitative research in health-related arenas. As the name Pearls, Piths, and Provocations suggests, we are looking for manuscripts that make a significant contribution to areas of dialogue, development, experience sharing and debate relevant to the scope of *QHR* in this section of the journal. **Reviewers are asked to consider the following questions when making recommendations about** articles in the Pearls, Piths, and Provocations section.

- **Significance:** Does the paper highlight issues that have the potential to advance, develop, and/or challenge thinking in qualitative health related research?
- **Clarity:** Are the arguments clearly presented and well supported?
- **Rigor:** Is there the explicit use of/interaction with methodology and/or theory and/or empirical studies (depending on the focus of the paper) that grounds the work and is

coherently carried throughout the arguments and/or analysis in the manuscript? Put another way, is there evidence of a rigorously constructed argument?

- **Engagement:** Does the paper have the potential to engage the reader to ‘think differently’ by raising questions, suggesting innovative directions for qualitative health research, and/or stimulating critical reflection? Are the implications of the paper for the practice of either qualitative research and/or health clear?
- **Quality of the writing:** Is the main argument of the paper clearly articulated and presented with few grammatical or typographical issues? Are terms and concepts key to the scholarship communicated clearly and in sufficient detail?

2.3 Common reasons for rejection

QHR most commonly turns away manuscripts that fall outside the journal’s scope, do not make a novel contribution to the literature, lack substantive and/or interpretative depth, require extensive revisions, and/or do not adequately address ethical issues that are fundamental to qualitative inquiry. Submissions of the supplementary component of mixed methods studies often are rejected as the findings are difficult to interpret without the findings of the primary study. For additional information on this policy, please read [Maintaining the Integrity of Qualitatively Driven Mixed Methods: Avoiding the “This Work is Part of a Larger Study” Syndrome](#).

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3. Preparing your manuscript for submission

We strongly encourage all authors to review previously published articles in *QHR* for style prior to submission.

QHR journal practices include double anonymization. All identifying information MUST be removed completely from the Abstract, Manuscript, Acknowledgements, Tables, and Figure files prior to submission. ONLY the Title Page and Cover Letter may contain identifying information. See [Sage’s general submission guidelines](#) for additional guidance on making an anonymous submission.

Preferred formats for the text and tables of your manuscript are Word DOC or PDF. The text must be double-spaced throughout with standard 1-inch margins (APA formatting). Text should be standard font (i.e., Times New Roman) 12-point.

3.1 Cover letter

* Authors must acknowledge in the Cover Letter any overlapping work whether published, in press, or submitted elsewhere. For studies utilizing empirical-based methods, this includes identifying complementary papers or those which draw on the same data set. Please note

that copies of such overlapping work may be requested during peer review to assist in judgments regarding novelty and significance of the submission. Generally, such work should also be referenced in the manuscript itself recognizing that conventions around blinding during peer review need to be followed. If there is no overlapping work, authors should explicitly state this in the Cover Letter.

3.2 Title page

- The title page should be uploaded as a separate document containing the following information: Author names; Affiliations; Author contact information; Contribution list; Acknowledgements; Ethical statement; Funding Statement; Conflict of Interest Statements; and, Grant Number. Please know that the Title Page is NOT included in the materials sent out for Peer Review.
- Ethical statement: An ethical statement must include the following: the full name of the ethical board that approved your study; the approval number given by the ethical board; and, confirmation that all your participants gave informed consent. Authors are also required to state in the methods section whether participants provided informed consent, whether the consent was written or verbal, and how it was obtained and by whom. For example: “Our study was approved by The Mercy Health Research Ethics Committee (approval no. XYZ123). All participants provided written informed consent prior to enrollment in the study.” If your study did not need ethical approval (often manuscripts in the Pearls, Piths, and Provocations may not), we still need a statement that states that your study did not need approval and an explanation as to why. For example: “Ethical Statement: Our study did not require an ethical board approval because it did not directly involve humans or animals.”

3.3 Abstract and Keywords

- The Abstract should be unstructured, written in narrative form. Maximum of 250 words. This should be on its own page, appearing as the first page of the Main Manuscript file.
- The keywords should be included beneath the abstract on the Main Manuscript file.

3.4 Manuscript

- Length: 8,000 words or less excluding the abstract, list of references, and acknowledgements. This applies to both Original Research and Pearls, Piths, and Provocations. Please note that text from Tables and Figures is included in the word count limits. On-line supplementary materials are not included in the word limit.
- Structure: While many authors will choose to use headings of Background, Methods, Results, and Discussion to organize their manuscript, it is up to authors to choose the most appropriate terms and structure for their submission. It is the expectation that manuscripts contain detailed reflections on methodological considerations.

- Ethics: In studies where data collection or other methods present ethical challenges, the authors should explicate how such issues were navigated including how consent was gained and by whom. An anonymized version of the ethical statement should be included in the manuscript (in addition to appearing on the title page).
- Participant identification: Generally, included demographic features or other participant information should be described in narrative form or otherwise reported in aggregate form as a group with limited specific and individual identifiers. Quotations may be linked to particular participants and/or demographic features provided measures are taken to ensure anonymity of participants (e.g., use of pseudonyms). Including such information should clearly connect to the purpose and analysis of the research. In other words, if individual details are included, this should be clearly related to the qualitative analysis
- Use of checklists: Authors should not include qualitative research checklists, such as COREQ (Consolidated criteria for REporting Qualitative research). Generally, authors should use a narrative approach to describe the processes used to enhance the rigor of their study. For additional information on this policy, please read [Why the Qualitative Health Research \(QHR\) Review Process Does Not Use Checklists](#)
- References: APA format. While there is no limit to the number of references, authors are recommended to use pertinent references only, including literature previously published in *QHR*. References should be on a separate page. *QHR* adheres to the APA 7 reference style. View the APA guidelines to ensure your manuscript conforms to this reference style. Please ensure you check carefully that both your in-text references and list of references are in the correct format.
- Authors are required to disclose the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (such as ChatGPT) and other technologies (such as NVivo, ATLAS. Ti, Quirkos, etc.), whether used to conceive ideas, develop study design, generate data, assist in analysis, present study findings, or other activities formative of qualitative research. We suggest authors provide both a description of the technology, when it was accessed, and how it was used (see <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/chatgpt-and-generative-ai>).
- Manuscripts that receive favorable reviews will not be accepted until any formatting and copy-editing required has been done.

3.5 Tables, Figures, Artwork, and other graphics

- Tables should be used sparingly and mindfully to augment what is written in the manuscript. Do not use tables to simply list demographic information about participants as too many individual details may compromise the confidentiality of participants.
- In general, identifying features should not be contained within images. For example, in photographs faces should generally be concealed using mosaic patches – unless

permission has been given by the individual to use their identity. This permission must be included at the time of submission.

1. TIFF, JPED, or common picture formats accepted. The preferred format for graphs and line art is EPS.
 2. Resolution: Rasterized based files (i.e. with .tiff or .jpeg extension) require a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch). Line art should be supplied with a minimum resolution of 800 dpi.
 3. Dimension: Check that the artworks supplied match or exceed the dimensions of the journal. Images cannot be scaled up after origination.
- Figures supplied in color will appear in color online regardless of whether or not these illustrations are reproduced in color in the printed version. For specifically requested color reproduction in print, you will receive information regarding the costs from Sage after receipt of your accepted article.

Submissions containing images must include a statement confirming that informed consent was specifically obtained for each image publication, provided by the participant or a legally authorized representative. Informed consent is required even when strategies have been employed to anonymize images. Please do not submit the participant's actual written informed consent with your article, as this in itself breaches confidentiality. Instead, we request that you confirm to us, in writing, that you have obtained informed consent to publish the image in its submitted form. Please be prepared to provide written consent forms signed by the participants and other appropriate documentation (e.g., evidence of ethical committee/IRB approval) to the editorial office upon request.

The use of artificial intelligence for image production and/or modification is discouraged unless it is considered a necessary part of the research design and/or methods. It is not permitted without a clear description of the process followed, including the name of the model or tool, version and extension numbers, and developer. This caution is due to potential copyright issues associated with using source images without proper attribution by artificial intelligence. It is the author's responsibility to demonstrate that all necessary rights have been obtained with correct content attribution.

3.6 Supplemental material

- **Core elements of the manuscript should not be included as supplementary material.**
- **QHR** is able to host additional materials online (e.g., datasets, podcasts, videos, images etc.) alongside the full-text of the article. For more information please refer to Sage's general [guidelines on submitting supplemental files](#).

Authors should familiarize themselves with [Sage's Accessibility Guidelines](#) to ensure their manuscripts meet recognized accessibility standards.

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4. Submitting your manuscript

QHR is hosted on Sage Track, a web based online submission and peer review system powered by ScholarOne™ Manuscripts. Visit <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/QHR> to login and submit your article online.

IMPORTANT: Please check whether you already have an account in the system before trying to create a new one. If you have reviewed or authored for the Journal in the past year it is likely that you will have had an account created. For further guidance on submitting your manuscript online please visit [ScholarOne Online Help](#).

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5. Editorial policies

5.1 Peer review policy

QHR adheres to a rigorous double-anonymized reviewing policy in which the identities of both the reviewer and author are always concealed from both parties.

Sage does not permit the use of author-suggested (recommended) reviewers at any stage of the submission process, be that through the web-based submission system or other communication. Reviewers should be experts in their fields and should be able to provide an objective assessment of the manuscript. Our policy is that reviewers should not be assigned to a manuscript if:

- The reviewer is based at the same institution as any of the co-authors
- The reviewer is based at the funding body of the manuscript
- The author has recommended the reviewer
- The reviewer has provided a personal (e.g. Gmail/Yahoo/Hotmail) email account and an institutional email account cannot be found after performing a basic Google search (name, department and institution).

Qualitative Health Research is committed to delivering high quality peer-review for your manuscript, and as such has partnered with Web of Science. Web of Science is a third-party service that seeks to track, verify and give credit for peer review. Reviewers for *Qualitative Health Research* can opt in to Web of Science in order to claim their reviews or have them

automatically verified and added to their reviewer profile. Reviewers claiming credit for their review will be associated with the relevant journal, but the article name, reviewer's decision, and the content of their review is not published on the site. For more information visit the [Web of Science](#) website.

The Editor or members of the Editorial Team or Board may occasionally submit their own manuscripts for possible publication in the Journal. In these cases, the peer review process will be managed by alternative members of the Editorial Team or Board and the submitting Editor Team/Board member will have no involvement in the decision-making process.

5.2 Authorship

Manuscripts should only be submitted for consideration once consent is given by all contributing authors. Those submitting manuscripts should carefully check that all those whose work contributed to the manuscript are acknowledged as contributing authors. The list of authors should include all those who can legitimately claim authorship. This is all those who meet all of the following criteria:

- (i) Made a substantial contribution to the design of the work or acquisition, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of data,
- (ii) Drafted the article or revised it critically for important intellectual content,
- (iii) Approved the version to be published,
- (iv) Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group alone does not constitute authorship, although all contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in the Acknowledgments section. Please refer to the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors \(ICMJE\) authorship guidelines](#) for more information on authorship.

Authors are required to disclose the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (such as ChatGPT) and other technologies (such as NVivo, ATLAS. Ti, Quirkos, etc.), whether used to conceive ideas, develop study design, generate data, assist in analysis, present study findings, or other activities formative of qualitative research. We suggest authors provide both a description of the technology, when it was accessed, and how it was used. This needs to be clearly identified within the text and acknowledged within your Acknowledgements section. Please note that AI bots such as ChatGPT should not be listed as an author. For more details on this policy, please visit [ChatGPT and Generative AI](#).

5.3 Acknowledgements



All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an Acknowledgements section. Examples of those who might be acknowledged include a person who provided purely technical help, or a department chair who provided only general support.

Please supply any personal acknowledgements separately to the main text to facilitate anonymous peer review.

Per [ICMJE recommendations](#), it is best practice to obtain consent from non-author contributors who you are acknowledging in your manuscript.

1.3.1 Writing assistance

Individuals who provided writing assistance, e.g., from a specialist communications company, do not qualify as authors and so should be included in the Acknowledgements section. Authors must disclose any writing assistance – including the individual's name, company and level of input – and identify the entity that paid for this assistance. It is not necessary to disclose use of language polishing services.

5.4 Funding

Qualitative Health Research requires all authors to acknowledge their funding in a consistent fashion under a separate heading. Please visit the [Funding Acknowledgements](#) page on the Sage Journal Author Gateway to confirm the format of the acknowledgment text in the event of funding, or state that: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

5.5 Declaration of conflicting interests

It is the policy of *Qualitative Health Research* to require a declaration of conflicting interests from all authors enabling a statement to be carried within the paginated pages of all published articles.

Please ensure that a 'Declaration of Conflicting Interests' statement is included at the end of your manuscript, after any acknowledgements and prior to the references. If no conflict exists, please state that 'The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest'. For guidance on conflict of interest statements, please see the ICMJE recommendations [here](#).

5.6 Research ethics and participant consent

Research involving participants must be conducted according to the [World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki](#)



Submitted manuscripts should conform to the [ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals](#):

All manuscripts **must state that the relevant Ethics Committee or Institutional Review Board provided (or waived) approval**. Please ensure that you blind the name and institution of the review committee until such time as your article has been accepted. The Editor will request authors to replace the name and add the approval number once the article review has been completed. Please note that in itself, simply stating that **Ethics Committee or Institutional Review was obtained is not sufficient. Authors are also required to state in the methods section whether participants provided informed consent, whether the consent was written or verbal, and how it was obtained and by whom.**

Please do not submit the participant's informed consent documents with your article, as this in itself breaches the participant's confidentiality. The Journal requests that you confirm to us, in writing, that you have obtained informed consent recognizing the documentation of consent itself should be held by the authors/investigators themselves (for example, in a participant's hospital record or an author's institution's archives).

Please also refer to the [ICMJE Recommendations for the Protection of Research Participants](#).

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6. Publishing Policies

6.1 Publication ethics

Sage is committed to upholding the integrity of the academic record. We encourage authors to refer to the Committee on Publication Ethics' [International Standards for Authors](#) and view the Publication Ethics page on the [Sage Author Gateway](#).

Please carefully review Sage's AI policy [here](#).

6.1.1 Plagiarism

Qualitative Health Research and Sage take issues of copyright infringement, plagiarism or other breaches of best practice in publication very seriously. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) defines plagiarism as: "When somebody presents the work of others (data, words or theories) as if they were his/her own and without proper acknowledgment." We seek to protect the rights of our authors and we always investigate claims of plagiarism or misuse of published articles. Equally, we seek to protect the reputation of the journal against malpractice. Submitted articles may be checked with duplication-checking software. Where an article, for example, is found to have plagiarised other work or included third-party copyright material without

permission or with insufficient acknowledgement, or where the authorship of the article is contested, we reserve the right to take action including, but not limited to: publishing an erratum or corrigendum (correction); retracting the article; taking up the matter with the head of department or dean of the author's institution and/or relevant academic bodies or societies; or taking appropriate legal action.

6.1.2 Prior publication

If material has been previously published it is not generally acceptable for publication in a Sage journal. However, there are certain circumstances where previously published material can be considered for publication. Please refer to the guidance on the [Sage Author Gateway](#) or if in doubt, contact the Editor at the address given below.

6.2 Contributor's publishing agreement

Before publication, Sage requires the author as the rights holder to sign a Journal Contributor's Publishing Agreement. Sage's Journal Contributor's Publishing Agreement is an exclusive licence agreement which means that the author retains copyright of the work but grants Sage the sole and exclusive right and licence to publish for the full legal term of copyright. Exceptions may exist where an assignment of copyright is required or preferred by a proprietor other than Sage. In this case copyright in the work will be assigned from the author to the society. For more information please visit the [Sage Author Gateway](#).


6.3 Open access and author archiving

Qualitative Health Research offers optional open access publishing via the Sage Choice programme and Open Access agreements, where authors can publish open access either discounted or free of charge depending on the agreement with Sage. Find out if your institution is participating by [visiting Open Access Agreements at Sage](#). For more information on Open Access publishing options at Sage please [visit Sage Open Access](#). For information on funding body compliance, and depositing your article in repositories, please [visit Sage's Author Archiving and Re-Use Guidelines](#) and [Publishing Policies](#).

7. Contact

You can direct any questions to:

QHR Editorial Office
qhr@sagepub.com

 Joanne Cheek, PhD, Editor
joanne.cheek@editorqhr@gmail.com

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