The Editor's Dirty Dozen

These are the top twelve problems that the Editor-in-Chief encounters with HDA authors.

1-4 Writing Problems

1. Poor sentence/paragraph structure
2. Fuzzy logic
3. Too many comparisons for text (needs a table)
4. Footnotes numbered incorrectly

These errors occur when authors have not written much before, are in a hurry, do not feel ownership of the manuscript, or use English as a second language. These problems will result in multiple rounds of revisions, since intellectual errors are often obscured by prose errors. Faculty co-authors/mentors can prevent these writing problems by asking for an outline with key points before the writing begins. Make sure the author is working from the full article, not the abstract. Work together to highlight the key points in the original paper and discuss these with the author before writing begins. These papers may take more revisions than usual to bring them to publication ready status. Please let the HDA Project Manager, hda@fpin.org know if you need help with the format or structure of the HDAs.

5-8 Style Problems

5. SOR does not have explanatory phrase
6. Studies not described in enough detail
7. Research studies referred to by the lead author's name
8. No STEPs in references

This is most common with authors who have written in other formats (eMedRef topics, textbook chapters, etc.) and who have not written HDAs or Clinical Inquiries for FPIN. The "voice" of *Evidence-Based Practice* is unique and does not come naturally to most new contributors. Authors can prevent these style problems by paying close attention to the Author Instructions and by reading EBP regularly. If you are not receiving an electronic version of EBP, please notify the HDA Project Manager, hda@fpin.org .

9-12 Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM) Problems

9. SOR does not match quality of evidence presented
10. Outcome data does not include measure of magnitude of effect (i.e. **how much better**)
11. Confidence intervals missing (over-reliance on P values)
12. STEPs noticeable incorrect (i.e. **STEP 1 for an RCT**)

These errors occur when authors are not familiar with the language of EBM, statistical terminology, or evidence grading. In addition, many older or poorer quality studies do not use the statistics that are preferred in EBM circles. Authors can prevent these EBM problems by:

a. Keeping copies of the CEBM Level of Evidence table and SORT classification handy (HDA Document # 108 *LOEs & SORs*)
b. Having a mentor/co-author who understands these things
c. Getting a copy of Sackett, et al. *Evidence-Based Medicine: How to practice and teach evidence-based medicine.* Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone 2000.

Please also refer to the FPIN Institute HDA Learning Path.