“I sometimes get an article to review that is outside my area of expertise.”

“Why was I asked to review this paper when it is clearly not appropriate for this journal?”

“I recently received a nasty review: what do editors do with the highly ‘negative’ review?”

“I am likely to do further reviews for a journal when I hear about the fate of the paper – what the other reviewers thought and whether it was accepted.”

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Characteristics of journal reviewers & reviews?

A great reviewer / reviews …
- timely
- Constructive
- Specific
- Concise
- Thorough
- Doesn’t edit
- Objective
- Non nihilist

A terrible reviewer / reviews …
- yes >> no
- Dismissive
- Nasty
- Doesn’t edit
- Nil picker
- Edits
- Uncommunicative
- No explanations
- Delay then reject

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Learning objectives

By the end of this presentation you will be able to:
- Discuss the importance of reviewers in the peer review
- List methods of reviewer recruitment & selection
- Overview strategies that can assist in producing an excellent review
- Outline how to recognize and reward reviewers
- And will have shared ideas for best practices

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Why peer review?

- Improve quality of paper
- Opportunity to learn Professional responsibility
- Author
- Reviewer
- Journal
- Advise editor Balanced Ethics

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Why peer review?

- QUALITY
- Author
- Reviewer
- Journal

‘Peer review is at the core of science and academic life.” [Bordage]
Reviewer recruitment & selection

- Expertise ...
- Complemented by judgment
- Experience
- Interested
- Motivated
- Time to do it

- Match reviewer / expertise with topic or article type
- Characteristics of reviewer producing ‘good’ review [JAMA]
  - Younger
  - Stats / epi training

Do you have enough reviewers for your journal?
Do you have enough high quality reviewers for your journal?

Reviewer recruitment & selection

- Journal
- Manuscript citations / bibliographies
- Literature search
- Recently published authors
- Role of editorial board / sub-editors
- Network / personal contacts
- Scientific organizations / professional meetings
- Other ...
  - Authors’ suggestions
  - Shared assignment with juniors
  - ‘Ads’ in journal . .

Reviewer recruitment & selection

- Authors
- Shared assignment with juniors
- ‘Ads’ in journal . .

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‘The reviewer serves as advisor to the editor, peer assessor to the experienced researcher, and teacher to the less experienced author.’

[Caelleigh]

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Reviewers’ perspectives of process

- Time spent in review 2-3 h
- Process of review
  - Helpful to ask a colleague: stats, expertise, literature, validate
- Problems with reviews
  - Reviewer: expertise, experience, expectations, being balanced
  - Manuscript: flawed, poorly written
  - Process: inaccessible references, time
- Facilitators to the review process
  - Covering letter with goals; instructions; good review form; reviewer training; feedback on reviews; access to literature; sample copy of journal
Guidance for reviewers

- Covering letter with the manuscript
  - Statement of journal’s purpose
  - Role of the reviewer
  - Instructions for the review and forms
  - Deadlines
  - Reviewer etiquette
- Format
  - Structured forms: provide a framework
  - Narrative: provides valuable feedback
- Separate the review & recommendation re publication

Reviewer training & mentoring

- 15-20% have it; 75-90% want it
- Part of graduate education
- Reading
- Consulting editors
- Consulting colleagues
- Workshops or seminars at scientific meetings

After the review

- Inform reviewer of fate of manuscript
- Share comments of other reviewers
  - Feedback to reviewer
  - Other perspectives
  - Benchmarking
- Annual report to reviewer
  - Number and quality of reviews [Ann Int Med]

Recognition and reward

- Thank-you’s:
  - In journal
  - Letter
- Recognition of quality
  - ‘Distinguished reviewers’
- Use of associated organizations – ‘merit points’
- Academic advancement
- …

In summary …

- Pick the right reviewers
- Give them the right guidance
- Recognize their contributions

‘The seasoned author anticipates peer review without particular relish but expects constructive criticism… Approached thoroughly, peer review represents collegial mentoring and contributes to the integrity of the scientific endeavor.’

References


Snell L, Spencer J. Reviewer’s perceptions of the peer review process. Med Education. 39:90-97, 2005