

# EDITORIAL



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## Reviewers are at the heart of the academic journals

Once we embrace medicine, we know that medical research is part of the deal. The accelerated technological development and the intensity of clinical research impose the constant need to dissect the medical literature in order to choose the best evidence-based decision.

Additionally, the exciting possibility of being part of the process, the responsibility and the intellectual honesty that are required, are challenges that some of us decide to pursue along with our clinical activity. The writing of a scientific article requires hard work, rigorous data collection and analysis and great network discussion.

The peer review process is a critical component of this creation, a bi-directional learning opportunity, the ultimate challenge the paper needs to face in order to be published.

Peer review of submitted manuscripts defines the process in which professional experts (peers) are invited to critically assess the quality, novelty, theoretical and empirical validity, and potential impact of research by others<sup>1</sup>. As pointed out before<sup>2</sup>, the term 'peer' is the key in this process. Peer means colleague, or equal. Authors and reviewers are essentially the same people with different tasks, taking the socratic method to its most refined form.

Peer review in forms that we would now recognize emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century due to the increasing professionalism of science, and primarily through English scholarly societies<sup>1</sup>, but this process was systematically implemented in publishing only in the 1960s. It lends judgement of scientific integrity, respectability and scientific credibility to the journals. Blinding improves even more the quality and consistency of the reviewers, as well as the quality of the final manuscripts, by eliminating any source of bias in their evaluation<sup>3,4</sup>, something we are proud to adopt in our journal.

From the reviewers' point of view, the opportunity to validate academic work is a privilege and a growing process. By helping to improve the quality of the research

submitted to publication, we are also improving ourselves. Doing peer review makes us better writers, ask more and better questions and also increase networking possibilities within research communities.

At the same time, a great deal of duties are asked to the reviewers: read outside reviewing and think critically, master the subject matter, understand the data sources, read the whole paper, be specific and detailed in your comment, be on time, be respectful.

As such, editors today face a huge problem when trying to find peer reviewers for a manuscript. Frequent causes for reviewer's refusal include reviewer fatigue due to excessive invitations to evaluate manuscripts, lack of time or dissatisfaction with the editorial system.

Traditionally, this function is delegated to a group of persons who perform the task altruistically and without compensation. But we know that leads to lack of motivation in the long run. The global question arises as to how to attract, credit and incentivize reviewers to facilitate good publishing practice.


Having that in mind we would like to give more visibility to our reviewers, as we know they are the cornerstone of the scientific process, despite the lack of true academic recognition.

While other ways of retributing are pending, we would like to give full credit to our cooperating experts. In the last issue of each year, a full list of reviewers will be formally published as a way to recognize and acknowledge all the inputs we received to improve the scientific quality of the papers submitted to our journal.

We also would like to endorse specific platforms that are now emerging that allow reviewers to add reviews to a public profile, and have them verified to be used in promotion and funding applications. Reviewer Credits is one of these platforms ([reviewercredits.com](http://reviewercredits.com)). Reviews performed for partnered journals can be instantly added to the reviewers' profile as they do them. The Open Researcher

and Contributor ID (ORCID) initiative is integrated in the editorial management systems of large and small publishers, and is another platform that may provide a solution to this problem by tracking all academic contributions including records of reviews<sup>5</sup>. The peer review section of the ORCID record is for information about the reviewers' individual peer review contributions.

Although we know our efforts are still far from a true reward for the reviewers' precious time, we will keep track of reviewer rewards and incentives. In the meantime, we hope you stay linked and engaged in the quality and timely evaluations of our journal submissions'.



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## REFERENCES

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