Editorial

Peer review and publication delay

Fernando FERNANDEZ-LLIMOS (iD), Pharmacy Practice 2018 peer reviewers.

Abstract:

Selecting peer reviewers is a crucial stage of the editorial process that ensures the quality of scholarly publications. An alternative to selecting peer reviewers from data bases created with expressions of interest of volunteers consists in systematically searching PubMed for similar articles and inviting their authors to act as peer reviewers. Although this process might identify more appropriate peers, it also can increase the time of the editorial process. In 2018, Pharmacy Practice had to invite 4.70 (SE=0.33) potential reviewers per one accepting. The time from the first reviewer invitation to the last reviewer report received was 61 days (SE=2.1). These figures confirm the existence of a peer review crisis which is significantly increasing the publication delay.

Keywords: Peer Review; Peer Review, Research; Open Access Publishing; Periodicals as Topic

Despite the efforts that some publishing platforms are devoting to convince researchers about the convenience of eliminating pre-publication reviews, these pre-publication peer review externally-done process continue to be the gold-standard in scholarly publication. However, we have to recognize that the peer review crisis does exist. Some optimistic editors in the early 2010s refused to accept the facts, reporting that the proportion of reviewers invited per accepting reviewer increased only from 1.38 (SE=0.02) in 2001 to 2.03 (SE=0.05) in 2010.[1] Conversely, other editors started recognizing the increasing difficulty recruiting peer reviewers, with an increase from 1.8 (SE=0.07) attempts to obtain an acceptance in 2008–2011 to 2.3 (SE=0.13) in 2014–2016, and 15% papers requiring more than 8 invitations.[2] Many alternatives to the traditional external peer review have been suggested, but their efficiency could not be demonstrated.[3] But, more importantly, their influence in evidence-synthesis has not been evaluated at all. Should we include an article uploaded to a pre-print repository in a systematic review or a meta-analysis, before a sufficient number of post-publication reviews have been performed?

In 2018, Pharmacy Practice publicly recognized suffering from the peer review crisis.[4] During 2018, Pharmacy Practice invited 879 potential peer reviewers, but only 198 (22.5%) accepted the task. This means that Pharmacy Practice invited 4.70 (SE=0.33) potential reviewers per one accepting. Additionally, 15 reviewers who accepted to review a paper did not deliver the review report. Peer reviewer selection process performance indicators in Pharmacy Practice seem to be quite below the two aforementioned journals. In fact, after the complete automation of the editorial process, selecting peer reviewers became the most time-consuming task in Pharmacy Practice's editorial process.

Pharmacy Practice editorial board started an in-depth analysis of the causes and potential solutions to solve this problem, while ensuring maintenance of high quality standards. Many journals created reviewer databases using the expression of interest received to act as a peer reviewer. Commonly, these databases use candidate-reported keywords as a means to identify areas of expertise to facilitate manuscript assignment. Criticisms regarding the poor quality of peer review reports received are frequent. Every researcher has personal anecdotes about their experience with peer reviewers' reports. One of my systematic reviews was rejected in a journal based on a reviewer's report that criticized our selection of bibliographic databases. The reviewer asked why we have not used Medline or Embase, when we had reported using PubMed and Scopus. In 2013, and to avoid the potential excessive self-esteem of spontaneously offered reviewers, Pharmacy Practice established a systematic peer reviewer selection process based on searching similar articles on PubMed and identifying the authors of those articles as the hypothetical best reviewers for the new manuscript.[5] This selection process involves inviting researchers that have previously volunteered to serve as reviewers for the journal, which may partially explain the lower acceptance rate in Pharmacy Practice.

An immediate consequence of the number of failed review requests is the increased publication process time. During 2018, Pharmacy Practice original research articles obtained the first response after peer review comments in 92 days (SE=5.7). The time from the first reviewer invitation to the last reviewer report submission was 61 days (SE=2.1). As major aim for 2019, Editorial Board have established the reduction in the time to make decisions, which means reducing the about 30 days that currently takes to: a) decide sending the manuscript out for peer review or desk-reject it; and b) analyze peer reviewers' reports received to decide whether manuscript modifications could make the article acceptable. Reducing the remaining 61 days will depend on our ability to convince pharmacy practice researchers that acting as a peer reviewer is probably the most important part of a collaborative publishing scheme.

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Pharmacy Practice 2018 peer reviewers.

Following the tradition initiated last year, Pharmacy Practice is pleased to recognize the contribution to the journal of those who served as reviewers, and reward their efforts by publishing the first editorial of the year with a collective authorship including all the reviewers that contributed during 2018.

Pharmacy Practice 2018 peer reviewers

Two reviews:

Rana K. Abu Farha, Applied Science Private University, Jordan

Mohamed E. Amin, Manchester University, United States

Suleiman I. El-Sharif, University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Shazia Q. Jamshed, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Emily Peron, Virginia Commonwealth University, United States

Jarred Prudencio, University of Hawaii, United States

Naser Y. Shraim, An-Najah National University, Palestine

Henok G. Tegegn, University of Gondar, Ethiopia

Fernanda S. Tonin, Federal University of Parana, Brazil

Monica Zolezzi, Qatar University, Qatar

One review:

Mera Ababneh, Jordan University of Science and Technology, Jordan

Hani Abdelaziz, Barnabas Health, United States

Samirah N. Abdu-Aguye, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria

Molla Abebe, University of Gondar, Ethiopia

Wuraola Akande-Sholabi, University of Ibadan, NIgeria

Sarah Alameddine, Nova Southeastern University, United States

Saeed K. Alzghari, Gulfstream Genomics, United States

Xavier Armoiry, Lyon University Hospitals, France

Isabelle Arnet, University of Basel, Switzerland

Omar F. Attarabeen, Marshall University, United States

Minyon Avent, University of Queensland, Australia

Ahmed Awaisu, Qatar University, Qatar

D. Rhys Axon, University of Arizona, United States

Hafiz A. Aziz, University of Queensland, Australia

Marion Bennie, University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom

Harika Bheemavarapu, Talla Padmavati College of Pharmacy, India

Susan J. Blalock, University of North Carolina, United States

Helena H. Borba, Federal University of Parana, Brazil

Alisha J. Bradley, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, United States

Cecilia Brata, University of Western Australia, Australia

Oscar Breukels, Meander Medisch Centrum, Netherlands

Emily J. Cameron, Dalhousie University, Canada

Jean T. Carter, University of Montana, United States

Jamie J. Cavanaugh, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States

Leanne Chalmers, Curtin University, Australia

Farid Chekani, University of Houston, United States

Brooklyn T. Cobb, University of the Sciences, United States

Anwen L. Cope, Cardiff University, United Kingdom

Marco Cosentino, University of Insubria, Italy

Philip J. Crilly, Kingston University, United Kingdom

Fatemeh Dabaghzadeh, Kerman University of Medical Sciences, Iran

Saibal Das, Christian Medical College & Hospital Vellore, India

Michael J. Davies, Liverpool John Moores University, United Kingdom

Hans De Loof, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Rebecca Dickinson, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Marlise A. Dos Santos, Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Marieke Ebbens, St Jansdal Hospital, Netherlands

Stephen F. Eckel, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States

Erika J. Ernst, University of Iowa, United States

Titilayo O. Fakeye, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Wentong Fang, Nanjing Medical University, China

Maryam T. Fazel, University of Arizona, United States

Stefanie P. Ferreri, University of North Carolina, United States

James W. Fetterman, South University, United States

Karen Fong, NYU Langone Health, United States

Lucia Franco Trigo, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

Jessica L. Gaskins, North Carolina State University, United States

James Gilmore, Brigham and Women's Hospital, United States

Maxine Gossell-Williams, University of The West Indies, Jamaica

Vicki Groo, University of Illinois at Chicago, United States

Rafel Guayta-Escolies, Council of Catalonian Pharmacists Associations, Spain

Salman Y. Guraya, University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Reginald Gyapong, Nova Southeastern University, United States

Souheil Hallit, Lebanese University, Lebanon

Carrie Harvey, University of Tennessee, United States

Mohamed A. Hassali, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Ana L. Hincapie, University of Cincinnati, United States

Maya Hites, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Kreshnik Hoti, Curtin University, Australia

Sherilyn Houle, University of Waterloo, Canada

Narumol Jarernsiripornkul, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

Susanne Kaae, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Sofia Kälvemark Sporrong, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Maram G. Katoue, Kuwait University, Kuwait

Hanna Kauppinen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Viviane Khalil, Monash University, Australia

Maher Khdour, Al-Quds University, Palestine

Annika Kiiski, University of Helsinki, Finland

Peter Knapp, Hull York Medical School, United Kingdom

Laura M. Koppen, University of Illinois at Chicago, United States

Sandra V. Kovačević, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Janet Krska, Medway School of Pharmacy, United Kingdom

Martine Kruijtbosch, SIR Institute, Netherlands

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