VIEWPOINT

Doing Your Part to Advance Pharmacy Education Scholarship

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The success of the *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education* (AJPE) relies on the peer review process, which facilitates the advancement of pharmacy education literature. This process depends on the willingness of qualified reviewers to share their time and expertise with contributing authors and *Journal* editors. Many in the Academy consider serving as a reviewer a professional responsibility of being a faculty member. The peer review is primarily a reciprocal endeavor; therefore, faculty should carry out their fair share in a timely manner.

In addition to providing service to the Academy, reviewers benefit from participation in the peer review process. Serving as a reviewer aids in becoming a stronger researcher and author through the identification of common manuscript problems and discovery of writing strategies. The review process may be particularly enlightening and constructive for residents and junior faculty. As reviewers become recognized for their quality reviews, there is a greater likelihood of being named to an editorial board, a prestigious position that is viewed as a sign of scholarly reputation.

Authors contribute significant time and effort preparing their manuscripts. They deserve an objective, honest, and constructive review, one that assists the author to improve the manuscript. Assuming that writing style is clear, always remember that it is the author's paper; the role of the reviewer is not to rewrite it in their preferred style. As a reviewer, make clear which suggestions are essential to support findings in the manuscript, and which are just offered to strengthen the work. Be specific in criticisms by providing evidence to substantiate general statements.

Authors also deserve peer reviews to be completed without delay. Significant delays are created by a lack of response to review requests, large numbers of potential reviewers declining requests, and late review submissions. When a request to review is received, respond in a reasonable time frame as to your availability and interest in reviewing an article, either in the affirmative or negative. The number of potential reviewers who either do not bother to respond to a request to review or who

deny the request continues to frustrate authors and editors. It is not uncommon for as many as 16 potential reviewers to ignore or deny a request to review an article before two can be identified. Given that potential reviewers are provided 7 days to respond to an AJPE request to review, authors' wait-time can be extended months by this in-action. Additionally, despite being provided with 21 days to complete reviews, many are not completed on time. Please contact the *Journal* if circumstances arise that will prevent a timely review, and provide an estimate of the time needed to complete the review.

Not sure how to be a reviewer? Editors are looking for reviewers to serve as subject experts to provide an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of a manuscript. Reviews should not focus solely on correcting grammatical errors. As a reviewer, the following dimensions should be considered:

Originality: A review should determine if the manuscript addresses innovative practices, approaches, or techniques, rather than represent a "me too" approach;

Significance: A review should evaluate if the manuscript provides substantially impactful findings or approaches, rather than just providing interesting information. Reviewers are looking for how a manuscript will provide value, importance, and worth beyond being interesting or able to be replicated;

Practical utility: With the goal of improving pharmacy education, a review should discuss the relevance of the findings to the Academy and practical application for pharmacy education enhancement;

Generalizability: Given the broad goals and varied audience of the *Journal*, a review should consider if the findings allow for generalizability across a range of disciplines and student populations beyond those utilized in the study;

Methodologic approach: A review should evaluate if the manuscript is free from flaws in research methodology or interpretation. In the case of innovations in teaching, the review should ensure that methodology

includes assessment of achievement of predetermined learning outcomes;

Theoretical basis: A review should evaluate if the manuscript is grounded in relevant theoretical concepts and evidence; and

Clarity: A review should address if the manuscript is structured in a manner that promotes a cohesive understanding of the information; it also should address if the manuscript is written in a clear, professional manner free from stylistic concerns and grammatical errors.

Reviews must be based on the merits of the work and not influenced – either positively or negatively – by any personal, financial or intellectual conflicts or biases. The *Journal* encourages international submissions; therefore, reviewers must be aware of the sensitivities surrounding potential language issues.

The *Journal* provides reviewers the ability to submit comments and recommendations to the author, and confidential ones to the editor. Comments and recommendations

to the editor should be consistent with those to the author. Most feedback should be provided directly to the authors. Providing conflicting comments to the author and editor leads to confusion and frustration, particularly if the editor decides to reject a manuscript based on comments only seen by the editor, but the author receives comments from the reviewer stating “this was the best article I have ever read.”

If assistance is needed during a review, editors are available to address questions or concerns. Some journals provide the final editorial decision and reviews by the other reviewers back to the reviewers. If provided, use this information to improve your understanding of the topic, the decision reached, and how to be a good reviewer.

Without reviewers, there is no peer review process. Without peer review, there is no scholarship. For faculty who serve as reviewers, thank you for assisting in the advancement of pharmacy education literature by supporting the peer review process.