Reviewing an article

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Objectives

- Be able to define your two roles as a reviewer for biomedical journals
- Be able to describe the questions to ask when reviewing a biomedical article
- Be able to describe how to write a review of a biomedical article
- What questions do you have?
Your role as a reviewer

- To determine what should be published
  - How important is it?
  - How convincing is it?
- To help the authors improve their article
  - Attitude you bring to your review
How to get asked

- Ask your mentors
- Ask the journal editors
- Have your colleagues suggest you as a reviewers
Should you accept the assignment?

Reasons to accept

- Allows you to understand the field
- Allows you to be a better writer
- Builds relationships
- Builds your cv
Can you be honest?
Can you be objective?
Are you knowledgeable in the area?
Should you accept the assignment?

Reasons to say no

- You are too busy
- You do not know the area
- You do not feel like it
If you say “no”

- Be polite
- Let them know you would be willing to do in the future
- Suggest some other people who might be able to review the article

- Why
- Contact information
Who does good reviews?

- Younger = better
- Being on editorial board = poorer
- Training epi/statistics = better
- >3 hours does not make it better
Overview

- Is it important?
  - What does it add to the literature?
  - What does it add to your clinical practice?
Overview

- Is it well done?
  - Methodologically
  - Writing
- Length
  - Editor’s decision
Overview

- Is it humble?
- Do the data support the conclusions?
- Are they aware of their limitations?
Double reading

- The second reading is for gathering the evidence for your decisions
- Writing the notes for your letter
- Clarifying your points
- Remember the goal is to help the authors make their article better!!
Abstract

- Summary of the article
- Story should be clear
- Editorializing minimized
- Journals may have clear rules about abstract structure
Introduction

- Do they motivate you?
- Do they provide enough background to understand the need for the paper?
- Are the aims clear?
- Do they have a clear story?
Methods

Are methods appropriate to the aims?

Are the methods sound?

Which way do the biases cut?

Is the analysis appropriate?

Are the analyses done correctly?
Statistics

- You do not have to be able to redo this
- Should know the appropriate statistics for the questions
- If questions, ask editors
Qualitative

- Most reviewers are not qualitatively informed
- Write for the reader
- Validity and reliability
  - Is your data “right”? 
- Consistency of your data
Results

- Are they clearly presented?
  - Sample
  - Answer questions

- Do they answer the aims?

- Do they follow the rules?
What if I do not agree?

“Rightness” or truth is not the criterion

Need to understand the other view and respond to it

Help me understand your decisions

A good argument supported by evidence is more important

If it is important or changes theory, more likely to publish
Tables and figures

- Are the Tables/ Figures needed?
- Is there a Table/ Figure-paper redundancy?
- Are the Tables/ Figures labelled correctly?
- Do the numbers add up?
Discussion

- Place data in context
  - How does this fit with what we know?
  - How does this advance the science?
  - What are the study’s implications?
Limitations

- Every paper has them
- Do they see them?
- Are they honest about them?
- What is their impact on their story?
Conclusions

- The moral of the story
- The implications of the story
- The next step
Did the authors review the literature adequately?
  - Not every reference

Do their claims match their references?
  - Number
  - Content
Writing

- Poor grammar
- Poor writing
- Jargon
- My response
  - Examples but not rewriting
Comments to Editor

Comments you only want them to see

Can focus on what you think should be done to the article

Place in context

If professionalism/ethical issues, put here
The decision

- Accept
- Accept with Minor revisions
- Major revisions and re-evaluate
- Reject
Comments to author

- Show your work
- Conclusions do not help
- Suggestions are even better
- Frame positively
- Be consistent with comments to editor
Major vs Minor comments

Big picture comments

- Things that would change the structure/story
- Paper specific

- Both positive and negative
Minor comments

- Line specific
- Editing
  - Do not rewrite paper
- Questions/comments
  - Frame positively
Anonymity

- Not an excuse to be mean
- And only partially anonymous
  - Authors
  - Reviewers
Does the journal matter?

- Not for the review
- For the decision
- My Role
- Editor’s role
Re-reviewing

- Response page
  - Answer all my comments
  - Clear about what going to do
- The paper itself
- What if I disagree with editor’s comments?
Reviewing the same article - new journal

- Difference in opinion
- “Fairness”
- Ease of review
- Did they make the changes?
- How to handle it
Confidentiality

- Material is confidential
- No sharing with others
- No letting others know you read it
- Intellectual property
Summary

- Reviewing helps your colleagues write better articles
- Write from a position of kindness, trying to help improve the work others do
- Good enough is good enough
Questions

What questions do you have?