

Have you Joined the Reviewers Community of JOCR Yet?



Reviewers are the pillars that support the magnificent edifices of journals. Seth Leopold, editor of CORR has rightly said reviewers are like refrigerators, cars, fingers, knees and shoulders. We notice them only when they don't work. Academic journals cannot exist without reviewers¹. JOCR has tried to redefine the role of reviewers in terms of utilising this opportunity to not only get best reviews but also to train the next generation of reviewers in the art of article review. Also, reviewer's job is perceivably a thankless endeavour. JOCR has gone out of way to acknowledge its reviewers. It is the only journal that publishes the pictures of its reviewers and issues them certificates of review. This helps in building an unique academic Network. Thus through the review process we intend to Educate, Review and Network.

I believe a review process of a journal which is trying to bridge gap between research and practice should have quite a subjective element. For this reason the guidelines are very flexible and anyone who is regularly reading JOCR will understand what is expected from an article to be published in JOCR. To begin with I would suggest the reviewer should follow the below detailed 4 step plan. Step 1– Read the full article quickly and then re-read it in search of the central theme of the article. This is the most valuable learning point in the article [according to the reviewer, not the authors]. Other additional learning points can also be noted in this step. Step 2– with the learning in mind the reviewers should check if authors have successfully brought out and discussed these points. Context with recent literature should be done by the authors. Step 3 – Read the major conclusions by the authors and check if the conclusions are substantiated by the case report. Step 4 – Look at the organisation of the article. Title: Is it accurate and justified. Abstract: does it bring out the important learning points. Introduction should justify why the article should be published and discussion should put the major finding in context with current ongoing Literature on the subject. Case report should be presented with sufficient details so that the reader can reconstruct the patient profile in his mind. Figures and tables: are they relevant and if a figure/table requires to be removed or added. Clinical relevance of the article is clearly mentioned. After these four steps, the reviewers can decide if the article is suitable for publication in JOCR. If there are points like missing x-rays, missing follow up, rehabilitation details etc they can be demanded by the reviewers.

Few general points on review

1. Be critical about the article and point out anything that you feel is inappropriate. Remember the goal is to improve the article and not to reject it. The review should be critical but constructive and if the reviewer points a criticism, he can even suggest ways to improve it [even if the article is rejected from JOCR, authors can read your comments and improve to publish in another journal.]
2. Please justify all criticisms by specific references to the text of the paper or to published literature. Vague criticisms are unhelpful.
3. Number your comments so that's authors can respond to them in that manner
4. Suggest changes to improve manuscript. Detail out specific region of the article where you wish changes to be done.
5. Be careful not to identify yourself by your comments or by the file name of your report if you submit it as a Word file.
6. Reviewers should maintain confidentiality and not share the manuscript or data with anyone
7. Reviewers should mention any conflict of interest
8. Reviewers should accept article which they are sure they can finish on time
9. Reviewers can bring to our notice if they feel the article is a duplicate publications or is plagiarised.
10. Ethical issues like consent, patient identity blinding etc can also be brought to notice of the editors.

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The reviewer is generally not expected to comment on the English and grammar of the article, but they can surely point out major errors.

Finally what is a good reviews and what is a bad review? A good review is a constructive documents that stimulates the authors to accept their errors and accordingly improve their manuscript. A good review recognises both positive and negative points of a manuscript and offers suggestions to improve the manuscript. A good review is also very logical document where every point is reasoned and justified by the reviewer. I found a very succinate description of a bad review and is quoted as "A bad review is superficial, nasty, petty, self-serving, or arrogant. It indulges the reviewer's biases with no justification. It focuses exclusively on weaknesses and offers no specific suggestions for improvement"[3].

JOCR also perceives the review process as an educational opportunity. For this reason we allow faculties with all background including a freshly passed out surgeon, trainee or an experienced surgeon to register as a reviewer. For each article two to three reviewers are chose, one is with less experience while the other is an authority in the subject of article. Also the article is reviewed by respective section editors. This provides us with two good reviews and helps us train one reviewer in the process. When reviewers point out the mistakes of others' manuscripts they also learn about mistakes to be avoided when they write a manuscript themselves. Reviewers also come to know about many things hitherto unknown to them. They read before and during review and come to know about lots of related things. Thus the process serves both as a learning for reviewing and writing a paper and also update on the topic that is being reviewed.

Reviewer's network is a concept which will take long time to build. For this reason we publish photographs and names of all reviewers in every issue of JOCR. This will help forge a bond between authors, reviewers, readers and editors of JOCR and help in building a huge network which can support the cause of JOCR and will foster greater orthopaedic camaraderie [2].

Even though review is said to be thankless, there are definite benefits. As reviewers we come to know what surgeons in India and all over the world are thinking and doing. We can learn about the process of journal publication, review and also manuscript writing skills. We can read about a subject is focus and develop a thought process about the same. At the same time JOCR acknowledges your effort and also gives you a certificate for each review and incorporates you in the network of JOCR Reviewers. I think this is an incentive enough to join the JOCR reviewers list and I hope more and more people join us in supporting JOCR.

Thanks and enjoy the new issue.

Warm Regards

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2. Shyam AK.JOCR: Personalised Journal, Personalised Network and ClinicalDecision Making (CDM). Journal of Orthopaedic Case Reports 2014 July-Sep;4(3):1-2.
3. https://facultystaff.richmond.edu/~rterry/NECTFL/How_to_Review_a_Journal_Article_NECTFL.pdf

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