FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

Rumors of the Demise of Peer Review are Premature

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“Peer review is faith-based (not evidence-based), slow, wasteful, ineffective, largely a lottery, easily abused, prone to bias, doesn’t detect fraud and irrelevant.”

—Richard Smith, former *BMJ* editor, remarks to the Royal Society, 20 April 2015

Peer review in academic publishing has come under increasing scrutiny. Richard Smith’s accusations of haplessness and irrelevancy are not universally embraced; however, a growing number of scholars and thought leaders have increasingly questioned accepted practices and supported alternatives, some of which call into question the basic assumptions of the current peer review process. For example, ArXiv now has over 1 million research papers in Mathematics, Physics, Computer Science and similar subjects stored in an electronic archive. There is no peer review process; it is up to the reader to assess the integrity of the methods and conclusions. Other projects have emphasized so-called “objective” peer review focusing on technical soundness rather than importance or originality;¹ community peer review conducted via a preprint depository; an open collaborative process in which a group of peer reviewers share critiques and sign the final review jointly; and granting authors “ownership” of peer reviews, which can then be shared with subsequent journals to which the paper is submitted.²

At *JGIM*, our take on peer review mirrors Churchill’s view of democracy: it is the worst form of scientific quality assurance except for all the others that have been tried. We are fully aware that our review process is not flawless (and in fact we have shown using our own data that it is not),^{3,4} nor are we averse to experimentation (our cooperative venture with the *Annals of*

Internal Medicine is one example: articles reviewed and rejected by *Annals* can, at the authors’ discretion, be sent directly to *JGIM* along with the *Annals* peer reviews). However, we continue to believe that our outstanding group of *JGIM* reviewers and deputy editors add value to the process of selecting and preparing manuscripts for publication.

In 2014–2015, *JGIM* reviewers volunteered their time and expertise to review about one-third of the approximately 1,500 manuscripts *JGIM* receives each year. During this period, 845 reviewers provided a total of 1061 reviews with a mean quality score of 4.35 on a scale of 1–6 (as judged by *JGIM* Deputy Editors). Of these, 191 (25 more than last year) provided at least two reviews and 24 provided three or more. We are indebted to them for their service.

Among this group of dedicated peer reviewers, there is a group of top performers who stand out. Reviewers included in this group performed at least two reviews between July 2014 and June 2015, returned all reviews within 30 days, and received a quality score of four or greater on all reviews. An asterisk identifies the 101 reviewers who met these criteria. We congratulate them on their service to the academic community and thank them for their efforts on behalf of the journal.

In our first “From the Editor’s Desk” in January 2010, we wrote: “In steering the journal forward...we will be guided by the principle that *JGIM* is a journal for generalists committed to improving the world in which they practice and teach. Thus, we will seek to publish data derived from settings where real patients live and real doctors practice, as well as reviews and tools that clinicians and educators can use to do their jobs more effectively, efficiently, and humanely.” We remain committed to this vision and hope that you, our readers, will join us by continuing to submit to, review for, read, and respond to *JGIM*. Whether in print or on-line, *JGIM* is your journal and we need to hear from you. Send us an e-mail and share your thoughts on the future of peer review, medical journalism, and general internal medicine.

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Singh, Sonal	Teo, Alan	Washington, Karla
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Sochalski, Julie	Thompson, Matthew	Williams, Dustyn
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Solimeo, Samantha	Tilburt, Jon	Williams, Winter*
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Swaika, Abhisek	Wagner, Todd	
Swensen, Stephen	Wakeman, Sarah	
Szostek, Jason	Wald, Jonathan	

*Superior Reviewer, defined as ≥ 2 reviews, quality score no lower than 4 of 6 on any single review, no review returned past 30 days

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