



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Peer Review at JGIM

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The JGIM editorial team thanks the many talented people who have volunteered their time as peer reviewers for the journal from July 2020 to June 2021. The pandemic has had an enormous impact, and journals including JGIM have also had to pivot. JGIM submissions increased from 1624 in 2017 to 3716 in 2020. While we had a brand new content area related to COVID-19, there was a steady stream of wonderful work unrelated to COVID-19. In 2020, submissions came from 57 different countries. While most submissions ($n = 2419$) were from the USA, 374 came from China, 98 from Canada, and 76 from Japan; 20 countries submitted 15 or more manuscripts. We could not have handled this dramatic increase without the dedicated work of our pool of associate editors and reviewers; we are very grateful for their hard work and dedication to professionalism.

There are many to thank and much work to appreciate. The record number of submissions has translated to a significant increase in peer reviews. Last year, 1560 reviewers provided a total of 2734 reviews with a mean quality score of 4.2 on a scale of 1–6 (as judged by our JGIM associate editors). Of these, 581 provided at least two reviews, and 263 provided three or more. Our reviewers came from 31 countries. We congratulate them on their service to the academic community and thank them for their efforts on behalf of the journal.

Reviewers completed their reviews an average of 13.7 days in 2020–2021. This has resulted in a decrease in the time from submission to first decision from 42.1 to 24.1 days in 2020. The improvement in our turnaround reflects the efforts in timeliness by all members of the editorial team, including the JGIM staff, the editors in chief, the deputy editors, and our reviewers.

The basic flow of our process has not changed. The editors in chief continue to reject approximately 40% of all submissions without review. We continue to depend upon an extraordinary group of dedicated associate editors who take a closer look at the remaining manuscripts and manage the peer review process for the majority of our submissions. We also, of course, rely upon our peer reviewers. Our acceptance rate has increased from 11% in 2016 to 28.8% in 2020. One of the consequences of this is an increase in the volume of

research articles published. This was a decision made by our editorial team over concern that the pool of quality places to publish original research has decreased, despite the plethora of new open-access options currently available.

While imperfect, peer review has been shown to improve the quality of manuscripts.^{1–4} Our authors appear generally grateful and most often say that they believe the process has improved their publications. We ask peer reviewers to identify scientific strengths and weaknesses, and assess the likely impact on the field of general internal medicine. A poorly written article may dissuade the team from peer review even when scientifically sound. While we ask reviewers to make recommendations regarding acceptance, we often see a range of opinions from accept to reject on the same paper. We use these recommendations as only one element in what is ultimately an editorial decision. We are grateful to authors who continue to submit to the journal, understanding that we are striving to get it right.

In previous years, we published a list of all of our peer reviewers, identifying a subgroup of particularly outstanding ones. This year we are not publishing this list because our publisher, Springer Nature, is subject to European Privacy rules which prohibits our doing so without consent from those listed. Instead we have emailed a letter of thanks to all our reviewers.

We are sometimes asked if we use peer reviewers that are suggested by authors in their cover letters. It is actually rare for our authors to suggest peer reviewers, and we generally do not use their suggestions unless the manuscript topic is particularly unusual or we know we might have called on some of those names anyway. Instead, we rely on the people who have described their expertise in Editorial Manager. We recently updated our classification matches and encourage reviewers to enter our system to ensure that we have accurate information on your content expertise. If you are not already registered as a peer reviewer, please consider signing up. There are a number of benefits to being a reviewer. We offer 3 hours of CME credit for all reviews completed on time that have a quality rating of 3 or better. It will also help you keep abreast of current work in your own areas of expertise and helps hone your skills as an author and a researcher. If you are publishing in JGIM, you are benefiting from the service of your colleagues through this process. If each article is reviewed by 3 people, that means that you should review 3 times as many papers as you submit! We look forward to working with all of our reviewers to deliver relevant, rigorous content for our readers in the years to come.

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