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Editorial Assessment

Richard M. Glass

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The assessment process (Figure) consists of 2 phases: editorial review and peer review. In editorial review, editors first assess submissions for their overall quality and appropriateness for the publication's readership. Some manuscripts are rejected on the basis of this editorial "triage." Manuscripts that pass this initial step go on to the peer review phase. Peer review (see , Peer Review) involves evaluation by experts who are "peers" of the authors with regard to knowledge about the topic of the submission, and may also include evaluation by expert statistical reviewers (see , Statistical Review). The integrity of the editorial assessment

Editorial Processing

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Editorial processing refers to the processing of manuscripts after acceptance in preparation for publication (Figure). With the development of electronic document processing, the term manuscript has moved increasingly far from its handwritten origins to refer to a prepublication document, whether it happens to be a hard-copy typescript or an electronic file. Manuscript submission, peer review, editing, processing, and tracking are now commonly performed electronically. A major technical issue for many publishers is the need to efficiently process content for multiple publication outputs, such as print, Web, reprints, and personal digital assistants (PDAs). The use of electronic markup languages such

Editorial Decisions

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date: 30 May 2016

On the basis of evaluations by the editors and peer reviewers, submitted manuscripts are either rejected or returned to authors with suggestions for improvement through revision. Authors should realize that a request for revision does not guarantee acceptance, because revised manuscripts are subject to editorial review and may also have additional peer review. Several rounds of review and revision may occur before a final decision is reached. Acceptance of manuscripts expressing viewpoints, perspectives, or opinions may be based solely on editorial review, but reports of original data and other major articles almost always undergo peer review, statistical review, and revision

Assessment Criteria

Richard M. Glass

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Two major criteria are central to the evaluation of manuscripts submitted for publication: importance and quality. Importance involves an assessment of whether the work • Represents a scientific advance (recognizing that individual articles usually convey only small advances) • Has clinical relevance (if the journal is to be read and the information used by practicing clinicians) • Presents new information • Will be of interest to readers An additional component of importance is editorial priority, a composite judgment made by the editor regarding the value of a particular submission relative to other submissions under evaluation at the same time, weighed

Peer Review

Richard M. Glass

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Peer review was first used for biomedical publications by the Royal Societies of London and Edinburgh in the 18th century, but it evolved haphazardly and was not used consistently until after World War II. The essence of peer review consists of asking experts “How important and how good is this paper, and how can it be improved?” (see , Assessment Criteria). The use of expert consultants to advise editors about the selection and improvement of papers has become a standard quality-assessment measure in biomedical publication. Yet the process and effectiveness of peer review have come under scientific scrutiny only since

Statistical Review

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Reviewers with expertise in statistics (including the assessment of study design and research methods) are essential to evaluate the quality of original research reports. Such reviewers may serve as paid consultants to a journal. Empirical studies have shown that statistical review can be very helpful in selecting and improving scientific reports for publication., Unfortunately, many published research articles are flawed by weaknesses in study design and methods that should have been detected by review or, far better, prevented by appropriate statistical consultation in planning the research before the manuscript was written. |

Selection of Reviewers

Richard M. Glass

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The selection of peer reviewers and the number of reviewers for a particular submission are matters of editorial judgment. Peer reviewers are usually experts who are not part of the journal staff. However, editorial staff members may serve as peer reviewers in areas of their expertise. Reviewers may be members of the journal's editorial board, or a peer review panel, or they may have no other association with the journal. The editor's knowledge of experts in a particular field often determines reviewer selection. Many journals maintain a database of reviewers indexed by areas of expertise and including information on review

Concealing of Author and Reviewer Identities

Richard M. Glass

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Among the unsettled issues in peer review are efforts to conceal the identities of authors (and their affiliations) from reviewers, and the question of whether the identities of reviewers should be revealed to authors. Biomedical journals commonly use a "single-blind" (single-masked) review process in which authors' identities are revealed to reviewers, but the names of reviewers are not revealed to authors (see , Ethical and Legal Considerations, Confidentiality, Confidentiality During Editorial Evaluation and Peer Review and After Publication). This process recognizes the difficulty of concealing author identities, makes it easier for reviewers to detect attempts at duplicate publication by the

Revision

Richard M. Glass

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If an editorial decision is made to request revision of a submitted manuscript, the author should receive specific recommendations from the editor about how to improve the paper, in addition to receiving the comments of the peer reviewers. Guidance from the editor is particularly important if recommendations from the peer reviewers are discordant. The revision process is also the appropriate time for the editor to make suggestions regarding condensing the manuscript and requests for additional data or analyses, and to obtain required authorship, funding, and conflict of interest statements. Authors are usually requested to submit a list of the revisions

Appealing a Rejection

Richard M. Glass

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If a paper is rejected, authors occasionally ask for reconsideration, usually because they believe the reviewers or the editor have misjudged the importance and quality of the submission. This situation can be viewed in 2 different ways. On the one hand, peer review and editorial decisions are based on fallible human judgments. Mistakes can be made, so perhaps the rejected manuscript merits reconsideration. On the other hand, heeding appeals for reconsideration may fulfill the adage “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” Reconsideration of papers solely on the basis of author complaints could be unfair to authors who have equally legitimate

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