2-Part Webinar Series: Critiquing a Published Article Series
Part I: Manuscript Peer Review Process

Questions Asked: 10 October 2024

1. I submitted a paper for peer review in 2021. It took a year to receive feedback, which was a rejection. I haven't gained the courage to re-submit. How many years after the research can the paper be re-submitted for peer review?

   It depends on the topic and the journal – basically the relevance of the findings to the time. So you would want to make the results relevant to the current. AND DO REVISE AND RESUBMIT!!

2. A paper of mine was rejected without explanation immediately after revising it based on the reviewers' critical comments. What could have played out?

   Probably the revision was not adequate for this particular journal – which often happens. But you now have a revised paper that can be submitted to another journal

3. What should be the maximum time for desk rejection and rejection after peer review?

   It really depends on the journal. This information should be available for most journals – so if the timing is important, you should target a journal accordingly.

4. You mentioned that 7000 research papers are submitted to BMJ for peer review (Slide 11). Does this number reflect annual submission?

   Yes – you are correct – annually.

5. Rates of the agreement only "moderately better than chance (Kappa=0.26); what does it mean? Do you think the chance is 25%? (slide 14)

   The kappa is an indication of agreement between reviewers. The 0.26 would indicate only fair agreement and different review opinions.

6. Do article processing fees impact the rejection/acceptance of papers?

   For legitimate journals – it should not.
   For predatory and 'for profit' journal – YES and this is a problem

7. You said peer reviewers volunteered their time, so why is so much money being asked for in APCs?

For legitimate journals, the fees are used for publishing costs and open-access. It is so important for everyone to assess the 'publishing cost' for legitimate and reasonable justification. And if unable to pay the costs- it may be worth contact with editor and publisher to see if there are options. It is also important to talk with mentors when targeting a journal to determine if there are resources for publication fees.

8. Are these fees (for publishing) ethical? Reviewers are not paid, so why these exorbitant fees?

   In legitimate journals – publication costs are justified and explained in the publication and open-access process. Again, it is up to the authors to assess if these fees are justified or excessive.

   For reviewers – the peer-review process is key and essential to the integrity of science publication. As such – it would be good to identify and recognize quality reviewers.

9. Do you agree that APC fees can have a negative impact on scientific research? It's time to revise this procedure, which makes primary selections based on money.

   Publication fees in legitimate journals can affect the submission. Thus, it is so important for authors to communicate with the editors about such issues.

   The publication process including the open-access details, are constantly being reviewed for improvement.

10. The expectation for external reviewers is high to maintain integrity and conduct a thorough, detailed review. However, I am curious about the motivation or incentives provided to reviewers, considering that their time and expertise are valuable.

    Again, peer-review is the key gatekeeper for the integrity for publication of science evidence. The motivation is the responsibility of investigators for quality peer review. The recognition of such is the reward.

11. Please share your views on offering some financial incentives to the reviewers to speed up the review process. I tend to think that if there were some incentive, the reviewers would give more time to it and thus improve the publication turnaround time.

    Typically, the incentive is the professional responsibility. The concern involves the unjustified excessive fees where the reviewers are uncompensated. This results in less qualified reviewers and less quality reviews.

12. I'm an early career researcher. Recently, when submitting to a journal, authors were asked by the journal to suggest 3 or 4 reviewers; based on your experience as the journal editor, could you share the best way to find suitable reviewers?

As we discussed, you want to identify individuals knowledgeable of the topic and methodology and published in the area. As well, individuals who can complete a fair and unbalanced review.

13. Is there any online training program for article reviewers?

    We try to offer through this program and through the World Hypertension League. As well, many journals offer programs for early career reviewers.

14. Can I submit the same paper to more than one journal at the same time?

    NO – typically when a paper is submitted, it is typically with the understanding the is NOT being considered by another journal.

15. Sometimes, less reliable journals reject the manuscript, while other good journals accept it. What is the problem? Is there a good review?

    It really depends on the journals. This is the reason it is so important to carefully assess and review the peer-review process for a journal.

16. Does the high impact factor reflect the journal quality and considerations for selecting our abstract?

    Typically, the higher the impact factor, the lower the acceptance rate and this can be considered an indicator of higher quality assessment.

17. Could you suggest some journals where I can submit a One Health-related work, mainly focusing on integrating animal and public health data through DHIS-2?

    It is usually best for the author to identify the target journal by reviewing and assessing individual journals. Below are two citations addressing the topic. The first is a review paper that would identify multiple journals that publish such papers.

    George J, Häsler B, Mremi I, Sindato C, Mboera L, Rweyemamu M, Mlangwa J. A systematic review on integration mechanisms in human and animal health surveillance systems with a view to addressing global health security threats. One Health Outlook. 2020 Jun 8;2:11. doi: 10.1186/s42522-020-00017-4. PMID: 33829132; PMCID: PMC7993536.

    Suravajhala, P., Kogelman, L.J.A. & Kadarmideen, H.N. Multi-omic data integration and analysis using systems genomics approaches: methods and applications in animal production, health and welfare. Genet Sel Evol 48, 38 (2016). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12711-016-0217-x

18. How do journals address the issue of gift authorship, where experts or scientists who were not involved in the research process are added as last-minute reviewers and listed as last authors? It raises concerns, especially considering the sheer volume of publications some individuals

accumulate—often reaching 800 to 1,000+. What mechanisms are in place to control this practice?

Typically, current legitimate journals ask the authors to identify specific roles. And the lead author has the responsibility to indicate that all authors participated in the manuscript.

19. Does the profile of the author(s) influence either rejection or acceptance of the paper?

    The paper should be evaluated based on the content and science, and not influenced by the reputation (or lack) of the authors or host institution.

20. Can the prestige of the journal, reviewers, and editors determine the quality of the paper published? What impact does this have on the overall quality of journal ranking?

    Typically the high quality journals maintain the most seasoned and higher level of reviewers and editors. But they also maintain a process to engage early career investigators in the peer-review process.

21. Do you think one can get tired of resubmissions and rejections without seeing the significant changes?

    Indeed – with each rejection. BUT – it is a critical part of peer review and each rejection should be considered an 'opportunity' to revise and resubmit somewhere else. Never quit!

22. What are the specific benefits of peer reviewers?

    Peer-review is the key stone of the science distribution process. And peer-reviewers are the gatekeepers.

23. What is the collaboration between the Peer reviewers, editors, and the publishing journal?

    This collaboration should be strong and detailed with open communication.

24. How do we determine the quality of the peer review process?

    By assessing the quality of the published papers. Indicators of high quality include the impact factor for the journals and the number of citations for individual articles.

25. The review process highlights how ambiguous and subjective the process is. Sometimes, the names of individuals and their affiliations carry more weight than the quality of the science itself. It's even worse for non-English speakers—your name can lead to repeated scrutiny, which is truly unfair.

As mentioned above, peer-review should be based on the content and science, and not the authors. That said, it cannot be overlooked that productive authors with strong reputation often write strong high impact papers. But acceptance of a paper should not be only based on name alone.

26. I think improving the quality of the review could be done by publishing the review with the article, as many journals do nowadays. What are your thoughts?

    Certainly a comprehensive and quality review of the literature is a major part of most all science papers.

27. As non-native English speakers, is it ok to use AI? Is it also allowed to ask AI to restructure the flow?

    Components like spell-check and grammar programs are fine. But AI should not be used for content. Regardless, non-native English speakers typically benefit from the review of an English writer colleague.

28. What are your thoughts on the utilization of AI for English grammar editing?

    As described above.

29. Prof. Weber mentioned that professional writers should re-write articles to make them better. Can the authors instead use AI to do so and, therefore, cut the cost?

    As discussed above, for spelling and grammar, AI is useful. But currently AI is not accepted by most journals for content

30. Is it always to research which adds something new and not to revise the old result?

    Sometimes an old results can have value if presented with a new interpretation.

31. Why should we be afraid of high-impact journals and not submit the articles? That is the case with many new researchers.

    Indeed, if an author determines the content of a paper may have value for an upper tier journal, it would be appropriate to target such. if unsure, many editors welcome an inquiry for such a submission.

32. Kindly clarify the paper retraction meaning. I think I missed something.

Articles may be retracted when their findings are no longer considered trustworthy due to scientific misconduct or error, they plagiarize previously published work, or they are found to violate ethical guidelines.

33. What could happen to the citations when the paper is retracted?

    In academic publishing, a retraction is a mechanism by which a published paper in an academic journal is flagged for being seriously flawed to the extent that their results and conclusions can no longer be relied upon. Retracted articles are not removed from the published literature but marked as retracted.

    If you do decide to cite a retracted article, you should cite the article, as well as the retraction note. And, in short, you should only cite a retracted article if you feel that it's absolutely necessary to your own manuscript.

34. How do you know this paper is a retracted one?

    Retracted articles are not removed from the published literature but marked as retracted.

    You can use the Retraction Watch Database to search for retractions. You can search by title, author, journal, DOI and other criteria to help specify your results. Instead of proactively checking for yourself, you can also use your citation manager.

35. Could you please discuss the consequences of retraction? The authors and the research institute always handle the consequences, but editors and reviewers are also responsible for the quality of the published paper and contribute to some degree to this issue. What do you suggest is the best action to take when finding some mistakes in a published paper that are most likely unintentional? Moreover, what do you recommend to prevent this from occurring at the first stage?

    In some cases, the retraction of a paper may prompt further investigation or research, particularly in cases where the misconduct is related to the accuracy of data or the integrity of the research process. In general, the retraction of a paper is seen as a negative outcome and is to be avoided whenever possible.

    It is so important for reviewers, editors, and readers to always be alert to the content of the science papers.

36. I understand that professionals should prioritize submitting to journals with high-impact factors. But how do we go about those journals that are still starting to gain submissions and aim to have a high impact factor soon? Who will submit to them?

    Indeed – a very important consideration. All authors should constantly assess the quality of journals and the peer-review process to assure a level to be considered a target journal.

37. Could you please shed some light on blueprint publishing & publishers?

Check the publisher's reputation by reading reviews and testimonials from other writers, and by searching for news articles or reports that mention the publisher. Look for information about the publisher's credentials, such as its history, awards, and the credentials of its employees

Guidelines for Evaluating Journals and Publishers:

- **Discover peer-reviewed journals using library search tools.**
- **Examine the aims and scope: are they appropriate for your research?**
- **Review past issues: does the content look topical and credible?**
- **Investigate history of article retractions using Retraction Watch.**

38. What does a paper on embargo mean? Is it the same as a retracted paper? Can it be cited?

    A science paper embargo is a temporary restriction on the disclosure of information in a research paper. Embargoes can affect authors, readers, and journalists, and can serve several purposes:

    - **Protect the public: Prevent misinformation by ensuring that the scientific peer review process is complete before the paper is published in the popular press**
    - **Benefit authors: Protect a scientist's claim for priority in the face of competition from other scientists and journals**
    - **Benefit readers: Provide a level playing field for all media to report on original findings**
    - **Benefit journalists: Allow journalists to work in advance on the papers, interview authors, and produce content without rush.**

    Breaking an embargo is considered a serious breach of trust and can result in the source barring the news outlet from receiving advance information for a long time.

    Certainly a paper can be cited AFTER the embargo is lifted.

39. A reviewer left negative comments on a manuscript, leading to its rejection. However, the same reviewer quickly wrote a new manuscript on the same topic and included some figures from the rejected manuscript. This new manuscript was then published in another journal. The issue was reported to the journal which rejected the original manuscript, but they claimed they could do nothing. The journal where the new manuscript was published has promised to investigate the issue. Is there a more effective way to address and prevent such occurrences in the research community?

    There are many such situations. The appropriate approach is communicating with the editor.

40. If a paper were published in a predatory journal, is it possible to publish the same paper in Peer review/Scopus-indexed journal?

    Unfortunately NOT. This is the reason the assessment of journals is so important before submission. If you publish your research in a predatory journal, you face these potential consequences: Damage to your reputation and career. Wasted time, effort, and money. Loss of your research and scholarship.

    Tips for assessing journal quality:

- **Be wary of emails inviting you to submit to journals you've never previously heard of.**
- **Check the journal title against a whitelist of reputable publications.**
- **Check the publication schedule.**
- **Be wary of offers promising of quick review.**
- **Consider the quality of previous issues.**

41. Can you tell us more about "predatory journals"? I have been hearing about this more often recently. How can one identify it?

    Predatory journals take advantage of the open-access publishing model by charging publication fees without providing standard peer-review or editing services. Predatory publishing can bring harm not only to the individual but also to the integrity of the scientific record and the reputation of scholarly publishing. Predatory journals provide readers with content that has not been properly vetted and is often of poor quality.

42. How could predatory journals be identified?

    Indicators for predatory journals include:

    - **Have no rigorous peer review, editorial, or preservation services.**
    - **Have no quality control in their selection process.**
    - **Exploit open access publication models for the sole purpose of financial gain.**

43. How does an early career scientist identify predatory journals?

    Here is the previous recording where we discussed predatory journals.

    Eight-part Scientific Writing Series: How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper - Zoom