

Peer review: purpose, process and positives

For referencing Prentice J. Peer review: purpose, process and positives. WCET® Journal 2019; 39(2):6

DOI <https://doi.org/10.33235/wcet.39.2.6>

The aims and scope of the WCET® Journal support the dissemination of information that advances the care of people with ostomy, wound or continence needs. It is imperative, however, that any information published is highly credible. One of the best ways of ensuring the reliability and validity of published material is to assess articles submitted for publication through the peer review process.

Peer review is commonly defined as... “a process of subjecting an author’s scholarly work, research or ideas to the scrutiny of others who are experts in the same field”¹. The WCET® Journal uses invited international subject matter experts and members of the editorial board to peer review submitted articles.

There are multiple reasons for adopting a peer review process that impact editors and authors. Firstly, from an editor’s perspective the primary reasons generally subscribed to are to maintain a high standard of published material; be it research, clinical case studies, educational theories, literature reviews or other commentary. Peer review assists editors to determine the worthiness of the publication from the point of view of originality, value and implications of research findings to the professions and the public. Are the conclusions drawn reliable and valid? Secondly, peer review assists in improving the quality of information published through independent constructive critique and suggestions for refining an article.

Other reasons are suitability of subject matter and does the article meet the WCET® Journal’s stated criteria in terms of interest, quality or new and significant information? Have the guidelines for authors been followed in respect of an abstract, word limits, accurate statements of the problem or methods used to review a subject and are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the results? Reviewers comments guide editors’ decisions to accept articles for publication with nil, minor or major revisions or to reject the article.

The WCET® Journal uses a double-blinded approach to peer review. Authors are unaware of who has critiqued the article and reviewers are unaware of who the authors are. Using this approach limits the potential for reviewer bias. Further, there is no direct communication between authors and reviewers.

Post article review editorial decisions, along with reviewers’ comments, are communicated to the author(s). The editor may also provide further advice. Authors are provided with instructions through ScholarOne on how to address

comments made. Authors always have a right of reply to justify article content and their points of view and to seek further clarification from reviewers. Once the article is resubmitted it is either sent for further review by the same or different reviewers or accepted for publication.

There are positive and negative views on the peer review process. Negative views centre around the time it may take to review an article, reviewer bias, lack of thoroughness or superficial assessments, failure to identify serious flaws and lack of transparency^{2,3}. The positives include articles that are well written, are clear in their methodology, analysis and conclusions. The profession benefits from exposure to peer reviewed articles in which there is greater trust and authors benefit from the wisdom of the reviewers.

First time authors especially may benefit from the peer review process as comments relayed back to the author(s) assist with article structure, grammar, correct use of figures, tables, references and most importantly subject matter and interpretation of findings^{1,3,4}.

As Mrs Margaret Mungai – Deputy Director Nursing Clinical Services Moi Teaching & Referral Hospital, Eldoret Kenya – and first author of the article ‘Avoidance of lower limb amputation from a diabetic foot ulcer: The importance of multi-disciplinary practice and patient collaboration’ as published within this issue of the journal recently stated, “The contribution of the editors was amazing and how they transformed our document to a case study was unbelievable. We look forward to continue working together on Wound and Ostomy care- a unique line of service in need by so many patients than the health care providers can ever imagine and more so in Kenya and Africa in general”, (personal communication 17 June 2019).

Peer review will continue to be an important, useful and positive attribute that underpins the essence of the WCET® Journal.

REFERENCES

1. Kelly J, Sadeghieh T & Adeli K. Peer review in scientific publications: benefits, critiques, & a survival guide. *eJIFCC* 2014, 25(3):227-243.
2. Schmitz J. Peer Review: Why is it important? <https://www.publisso.de/en/advice/publishing-advice-faqs/peer-review/> Accessed 1st June 2019
3. Gannon F. In: Editorial. The essential role of peer review. *EMBO Rep.* 2001 Sep 15; 2(9): 743. doi: 10.1093/embo-reports/kve188 Accessed 8th June 2019.
4. Jennings CG. Quality and value: The true purpose of peer review. *Nature* (2006). doi:10.1038/nature0503

Jenny Prentice

PhD, BN, RN, STN, FAWMA