

## Pharma Publications Peer Review Protocol

### Peer-review policy

The policy outlined on this page applies to **Pharma Publications** journals namely **IPI (International Pharmaceutical industry)**, **JCS (Journal for Clinical Studies)**, **JPC (Journal for Patient Compliance)** and **IAHJ (International Animal Health Journal)**.

### General information

The following types of contribution to **Pharma Publications** journals are peer-reviewed:

Articles, Letters, Brief Communications, Communications Arising, Technical Reports, Analysis, Reviews, Perspectives, Progress articles and Insight articles. All forms of published correction may also be peer-reviewed at the discretion of the editors.

Other contributed Watch Pages (Short regular blogs and columns) are not usually peer-reviewed.

For any general questions and comments about the peer-review process reviewers are encouraged to contact us using the feedback links in the box at the top right of each page in the authors & referees' website.

Questions about a specific manuscript should be directed to the editor who is handling the manuscript.

The peer-review policies can be found on **Pharma Publications** websites - [www.JforCS.com](http://www.JforCS.com); [www.JforPC.com](http://www.JforPC.com); [www.IPImedia.com](http://www.IPImedia.com) and [www.animalhealthmedia.com](http://www.animalhealthmedia.com)

### Criteria for publication

**Pharma Publications** journals receive many more submissions than they can publish. Therefore, we ask peer-reviewers to keep in mind that every paper that is accepted means that another good paper must be rejected. To be published in a **Pharma Publications** journal, a paper should meet four general criteria:

- Provides strong evidence for its conclusions.
- Novel (we do not consider meeting report abstracts and preprints on community servers to compromise novelty).
- Of extreme importance to scientists in the specific field.
- Ideally, interesting to researchers in other related disciplines.

In general, to be acceptable, a paper should represent an advance in understanding likely to influence thinking in the field. There should be a good and clear reason why the work deserves the visibility of publication in a **Pharma Publications** journal rather than a different journal.

### The review process

All submitted manuscripts are read by the editorial staff. To save time for authors and peer-reviewers, only those papers that seem most likely to meet our editorial criteria are sent for formal review. Those papers judged by the editors to be of insufficient general interest or otherwise inappropriate are rejected promptly without external review (although these decisions may be based on informal advice from specialists in the field).

Manuscripts judged to be of potential interest to our readership are sent for formal review, typically to two or three reviewers, but sometimes more if special advice is needed (for example on statistics or a particular technique). The editors then make a decision based on the reviewers' advice, from among several possibilities:

- Accept, with or without editorial revisions
- Invite the authors to revise their manuscript to address specific concerns before a final decision is reached
- Reject, but indicate to the authors that further work might justify a resubmission
- Reject outright, typically on grounds of specialist interest, lack of novelty, insufficient conceptual advance or major technical and/or interpretational problems

Reviewers are welcome to recommend a particular course of action, but they should bear in mind that the other reviewers of a particular paper may have different technical expertise and/or views, and the editors may have to make a decision based on conflicting advice. The most useful reports, therefore, provide the editors with the information on which a decision should be based. Setting out the arguments for and against publication is often more helpful to the editors than a direct recommendation one way or the other. Editorial decisions are not a matter of counting votes or numerical rank assessments, and we do not always follow the majority recommendation. We try to evaluate the strength of the arguments raised by each reviewer and by the authors, and we may also consider other information not available to either party. Our primary responsibilities are to our readers and to the scientific community at large, and in deciding how best to serve them, we must weigh the claims of each paper against the many others also under consideration.

We may return to reviewers for further advice, particularly in cases where they disagree with each other, or where the authors believe they have been misunderstood on points of fact. We therefore ask that reviewers should be willing to provide follow-up advice as requested. We are very aware, however, that reviewers are usually reluctant to be drawn into prolonged disputes, so we try to keep consultation to the minimum we judge necessary to provide a fair hearing for the authors.

When reviewers agree to assess a paper, we consider this a commitment to review subsequent revisions. However, editors will not send a resubmitted paper back to the reviewers if it seems that the authors have not made a serious attempt to address the criticisms.

We take reviewers' criticisms seriously; in particular, we are very reluctant to disregard technical criticisms. In cases where one reviewer alone opposes publication, we may consult the other reviewers as to whether s/he is applying an unduly critical standard. We occasionally bring in additional reviewers to resolve disputes, but we prefer to avoid doing so unless there is a specific issue, for example a specialist technical point, on which we feel a need for further advice.

## **Pharma Publications Peer Review Protocol**

### **Selection of peer-reviewers**

Reviewer selection is critical to the publication process, and we base our choice on many factors, including expertise, reputation, specific recommendations and our own previous experience of a reviewer's characteristics. For instance, we avoid using people who are slow, careless, or do not provide reasoning for their views, whether harsh or lenient.

We check with potential reviewers before sending them manuscripts to review. Reviewers should bear in mind that these messages contain confidential information, which should be treated as such.

### **Access to the literature**

If a reviewer does not have access to any published paper that is necessary for evaluation of a submitted manuscript, the journal will supply the reviewer with a copy. Under these circumstances, the reviewer should send the publication reference of the paper required to the editor who sent them the paper to review. The editor will obtain the paper, paying any necessary fees, and send it to the reviewer.

### **Writing the review**

The primary purpose of the review is to provide the editors with the information needed to reach a decision. The review should also instruct the authors on how they can strengthen their paper to the point where it may be acceptable. As far as possible, a negative review should explain to the authors the weaknesses of their manuscript, so that rejected authors can understand the basis for the decision and see in broad terms what needs to be done to improve the manuscript for publication elsewhere. This is secondary to the other functions, however, and referees should not feel obliged to provide detailed, constructive advice to authors of papers that do not meet the criteria for the journal (as outlined in the letter from the editor when asking for the review). If the reviewer believes that a manuscript would not be suitable for publication, his/her report to the author should be as brief as is consistent with enabling the author to understand the reason for the decision.

Confidential comments to the editor are welcome, but it is helpful if the main points are stated in the comments for transmission to the authors. The ideal review should answer the following questions:

- Who will be interested in reading the paper, and why?
- What are the main claims of the paper and how significant are they?
- Is the paper likely to be one of the five most significant papers published in the discipline this year?
- How does the paper stand out from others in its field?
- Are the claims novel? If not, which published papers compromise novelty?
- Are the claims convincing? If not, what further evidence is needed?
- Are there other experiments or work that would strengthen the paper further?
- How much would further work improve it, and how difficult would this be? Would it take a long time?
- Are the claims appropriately discussed in the context of previous literature?
- If the manuscript is unacceptable, is the study sufficiently promising to encourage the authors to resubmit?
- If the manuscript is unacceptable but promising, what specific work is needed to make it acceptable?

### **Other considerations**

We appreciate that reviewers are busy, and we are very grateful if they can answer the questions in the section above.

However, if time is available, it is extremely helpful to the editors if reviewers can advise on some of the following points:

- Is the manuscript clearly written? If not, how could it be made more clear or accessible to non-specialists?
- Would readers outside the discipline benefit from a schematic of the main result to accompany publication?
- Could the manuscript be shortened? (Because of pressure on space in our printed pages we aim to publish manuscripts as short as is consistent with a persuasive message.)
- Should the authors be asked to provide supplementary methods or data to accompany the paper online? (Such data might include source code for modelling studies, detailed experimental protocols or mathematical derivations.)
- Have the authors done themselves justice without overselling their claims?
- Have they been fair in their treatment of previous literature?
- Have they provided sufficient methodological detail that the experiments could be reproduced?
- Is the statistical analysis of the data sound, and does it conform to the journal's guidelines?
- Are the reagents generally available?
- Are there any special ethical concerns arising from the use of human or other animal subjects?

## Timing

**Pharma Publications** journals are committed to rapid editorial decisions and publication, and we believe that an efficient editorial process is a valuable service both to our authors and to the scientific community as a whole. We therefore ask reviewers to respond promptly within the number of days agreed. If reviewers anticipate a longer delay than previously expected, we ask them to let us know so that we can keep the authors informed and, where necessary, find alternatives.

## Anonymity

We do not release reviewers' identities to authors or to other reviewers, except when reviewers specifically ask to be identified. Unless they feel strongly, however, we prefer that reviewers should remain anonymous throughout the review process and beyond. Before revealing their identities, reviewers should consider the possibility that they may be asked to comment on the criticisms of other reviewers and on further revisions of the manuscript; identified reviewers may find it more difficult to be objective in such circumstances.

We ask reviewers not to identify themselves to authors without the editor's knowledge. If they wish to reveal their identities while the manuscript is under consideration, this should be done via the editor, or if this is not practicable, we ask authors to inform the editor as soon as possible after the reviewer has revealed his or her identity to the author.

We deplore any attempt by authors to confront reviewers or determine their identities. Our own policy is to neither confirm nor deny any speculation about reviewers' identities, and we encourage reviewers to adopt a similar policy.

## Editing referees' reports

As a matter of policy, we do not suppress reviewers' reports; any comments that were intended for the authors are transmitted, regardless of what we may think of the content. On rare occasions, we may edit a report to remove offensive language or comments that reveal confidential information about other matters. We ask reviewers to avoid statements that may cause needless offence; conversely, we strongly encourage reviewers to state plainly their opinion of a paper. Authors should recognize that criticisms are not necessarily unfair simply because they are expressed in robust language.

## The peer-review system

It is editors' experience that the peer-review process is an essential part of the publication process, which improves the manuscripts our journals publish. Not only does peer review provide an independent assessment of the importance and technical accuracy of the results described, but the feedback from referees conveyed to authors with the editors' advice frequently results in manuscripts being refined so that their structure and logic is more readily apparent to readers.

**Pharma Publications** journals are appreciative of its peer-reviewers, of whom there are many tens of thousands. It is only by collaboration with our reviewers that editors can ensure that the manuscripts we publish are among the most important in their disciplines of scientific research. We appreciate the time that reviewers devote to assessing the manuscripts we send them, which helps ensure that **Pharma Publications** journals publish only material of the very highest quality. In particular, many submitted manuscripts contain large volumes of additional (supplementary) data and other material, which take time to evaluate. We thank our reviewers for their continued commitment to our publication process.

## Peer-review publication policies

All contributions submitted to **Pharma Publications** journals that are selected for peer-review are sent to at least one, but usually two or more, independent reviewers, selected by the editors. Authors are welcome to suggest suitable independent reviewers and may also request that the journal excludes one or two individuals or laboratories. The journal sympathetically considers such requests and usually honours them, but the editor's decision on the choice of referees is final.

As a condition of agreeing to assess the manuscript, all reviewers undertake to keep submitted manuscripts and associated data confidential, and not to redistribute them without permission from the journal. If a reviewer seeks advice from colleagues while assessing a manuscript, he or she ensures that confidentiality is maintained and that the names of any such colleagues are provided to the journal with the final report. By this and by other means, **Pharma Publications** journals endeavour to keep the content of all submissions confidential until the publication date other than in the specific case of its embargoed Press release available to registered journalists. Although we go to every effort to ensure reviewers honour their promise to ensure confidentiality, we are not responsible for the conduct of reviewers.

Reviewers should be aware that it is our policy to keep their names confidential, and that we do our utmost to ensure this confidentiality. Under normal circumstances, blind peer-review is protected from legislation. We cannot, however, guarantee to maintain this confidentiality in the face of a successful legal action to disclose identity in the event of a reviewer having written personally derogatory comments about the authors in his or her reports. For this reason as well as for reasons of standard professional courtesy, we request reviewers to refrain from personally negative comments about the authors of submitted manuscripts. Frank comments about the scientific content of the manuscripts, however, are strongly encouraged by the editors.

## Ethics and security

**Pharma Publications** journal editors may seek advice about submitted papers not only from technical reviewers but also on any aspect of a paper that raises concerns. These may include, for example, ethical issues or issues of data or materials access. Very occasionally, concerns may also relate to the implications to society of publishing a paper, including threats to security. In such circumstances, advice will usually be sought simultaneously with the technical peer-review process. As in all publishing decisions, the ultimate decision whether to publish is the responsibility of the editor of the journal concerned.

## Author licence policy

When a manuscript is accepted for publication in a **Pharma Publications** journal, authors are encouraged to submit the author's version of the accepted paper (the unedited manuscript) to PubMedCentral or other appropriate funding body's archive, for public release six months after publication. In addition, authors are encouraged to archive this version of the manuscript in their institution's repositories and, if they wish, on their personal websites, also six months after the original publication. If the author wishes to buy the copy right to the article, and expects **Pharma Publications** to provide them with a high resolution print ready file, a minimum charge of £395 will apply.



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