

## ***Annals of Pharmacotherapy*: GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS**

The primary purpose of a manuscript review is to provide *Annals of Pharmacotherapy* editors with commentary to assist them in making a decision regarding publication of the manuscript. Note that the Editors may have to make a decision based on conflicting reviews and as such it is important that reviewers provide detailed and justified arguments to support their recommendation for or against publication. Indeed, one of the most important responsibilities entrusted to peer reviewers are their recommendations about flawed research or reviews to prevent their publication.

A good review takes into consideration the scientific merit of a manuscript, how it fits with the journal's purpose, aims and scope, prior related publications, and the potential significance of the work to advance knowledge and impact patient care.

If you are a new reviewer, consider working with an experienced reviewer. Review the manuscript independently, and then discuss your review to identify items you may have overlooked. Learn about the journal. Review author guidelines and some issues of the journal to become familiar with the requirements for each type of submission.

### **Initial Considerations Before Beginning Your Review**

Do you have any potential conflicts of interest? Do you have other obligations that might prevent a timely review? If so, contact the editor immediately so that the manuscript can be offered to other reviewers without a delay in the review process.

Do you know enough about this topic to adequately review it? If not, are you willing to do the study necessary to provide a good review? If the topic is not within your areas of expertise and you are not interested in reviewing the relevant literature, you should decline the review and relay this decision to the Editors as quickly as possible.

Confidentiality concerning manuscripts being peer reviewed is required and using or sharing reported data is prohibited, as is using the paper under review to further the reviewer's own interests. In addition, peer reviewers should not have direct contact with the author of the manuscript under review without the Editor's specific permission.

### **Global Assessment of the Manuscript**

Will the work make an important contribution to patient care?

Who will be interested in this paper and why? Does the manuscript reflect the standards expected of articles published in the *Annals*?

What is the primary point or purpose of the paper? Is this clear throughout the manuscript?

Does the title appropriately reflect the contents of the manuscript?

Is the manuscript clearly written?

Does the abstract accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?

### **Assessing the Body of the Manuscript**

Does each section of the manuscript actually contain the appropriate material?

How does the manuscript relate to previous publications on the topic? Do the authors cite relevant prior publications on the topic? Do they accurately convey the findings of these prior papers?

Are there other pertinent citations that the authors did not include that you can recommend?

If reviewing original research, check that the authors have included a statement to establish that the study was reviewed and approved by their Institutional Review Board. Does the study meet the requirements of ethical research?

Are the methods, including primary and secondary outcomes, clearly defined such that the study could be replicated? What further data or analysis would make the paper better? Is the statistical analysis of the data appropriate? If a statistical review is beyond your expertise, you should suggest to the Editor review by a statistician.

Are there data that were collected but not adequately described in the Results or Discussion?

Do the data support the authors' conclusions? One of the most commonly encountered problems with research submissions is an overstatement of the significance of the study results.

Confounding factors or study limitations can markedly alter research outcomes. Did the authors identify and account for important confounders? If confounders or limitations are not eliminated, did authors discuss their potential influence on the study's outcome?

Could the manuscript be shortened without compromising the clarity or content? Do the tables and figures add to the value of the manuscript? Data contained in tables or figures should not be duplicated in the body of the manuscript.

### **Writing Your Review**

Focus on content rather than writing style. Peer review is designed to evaluate the merit and ensure the scientific integrity of the manuscript. The editorial staff at the *Annals* will assist the authors with grammatical issues. Do note sentences, however, that are unclear and need to be reworded in order to relay the correct information to the reader.

Organize your review to follow the format of the manuscript. Label each comment so that the Editor and authors know exactly on what you are commenting. You should start each comment with the location of corresponding sentence in the manuscript. For example, “On page 2, Introduction section, first paragraph, lines 22-34, include the total dose administered over 24 hours.”

It is often helpful to provide a summary or general comments section where you clearly state your overall opinion of the manuscript, followed by your specific suggestions for improvement. Do not forget to include praise for what you see as the strengths of the manuscript.

You may separate comments into Major and Minor based on their relative importance in making the manuscript publishable.

Be prepared to allocate adequate time to read the manuscript and prepare your review. Original research and detailed therapeutic reviews often take several hours or more to review. Seasoned reviewers often do a quick initial read to form an initial impression of the paper, followed by a second, more careful reading prior to writing their reviews.

Make notes as you read to serve as a guide for preparing your review.

Carefully read the Methods section so you understand what was done and if these were clearly presented. Indicate any limitations of the Methods and indicate what should have been done or would be needed to overcome these limitations.

If you question a statement or citation in the manuscript, check it for accuracy against the original reference.

Keep your comments to the authors professional (and never personal), collegial, and unemotional and treat both the author and the paper with respect. While the goal of your comments to the Editor is to determine whether the paper should or should not be published, the goal of your comments to the authors is to assist them with making their manuscript a better paper. Never write a review in a derogatory style that you wouldn't want to receive as an author.

A helpful guideline on reviewing scientific articles has been published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*.<sup>1</sup>

#### Reference

1. Hoppin, Jr., FG. How I review an original scientific article. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2002;166:1019-23. DOI: [10.1164/rccm.200204-324OE](https://doi.org/10.1164/rccm.200204-324OE)