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Journal article

**A good manuscript review for the European Journal of
Cardiovascular Nursing [Editorial]**

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A good manuscript review for the European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing

Editorial

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As noted in a previous editorial, making a journal successful is a team effort with contributions from authors, editors and reviewers (1). Reviewers play an important role in assuring and improving the quality of manuscripts submitted to the *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*. The function of a peer review process is considered an integral part of scholarly communication helping to ensure validity, increase accuracy, and enhance content prior to publication (2). A peer review should evaluate the novelty, quality and value of the manuscript for the scientific community and the readers of the journal. Reviewers are asked to place the manuscript in proper perspective (3). Peer review asks dedicated time and the effort of reviewers and their reviews helps the editors decide which manuscript to accept or to reject. Peer reviews also often markedly improve a manuscript. We believe it is timely and useful for the editorial team to define what we regard as a constructive peer review for the *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*.

A good and constructive peer review for the journal is based on a balanced feedback and comprises several components concerning the overall quality, scientific quality and the relevance for the readers. We encourage our reviewers to state their comments in a clear, concise and structured way. More importantly, we expect reviewers to take a constructive view and formulate their reflections on the manuscript in such a way that it might be used to improve it rather than to be unnecessarily critical and harsh and thus ultimately discourage authors to publish their work. At the same time even if a manuscript is clearly of a very good or very poor quality, the editors still require a thorough evaluation and cannot merely base their decision on a simple and vague ‘accept’ or ‘reject’ judgment.

1. Overall quality

A good peer review includes an assessment on the overall quality of the manuscript. This includes assessment of writing style, language and clarity. Although we realize that many authors do not have English as their mother tongue/first language, it is important that manuscripts are written with an appropriate use of the English language, since errors in grammar, spelling and typography make it difficult to read and can lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Authors may be asked to correct specific errors or have manuscripts corrected by a translator or copy-editor before formal review. A good peer review also comments on the organization and the format of a document: is the manuscript organized according to the standards of the *European*

Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing? Are headings and subheadings used appropriately? Is there a logical flow in the manuscript? Are references appropriate, relevant, well balanced and fitting the style of the journal? Are the references in English and accessible to an international audience? Another aspect of overall quality that reviewers are expected to evaluate is the quality of the tables and figures. Are these or other images, relevant, of sufficient quality or redundant?

2. Scientific quality

The core of the review of the manuscript is the evaluation on scientific quality. Reviewers comment on the quality of the science as described in the introduction, aims, methods, analysis, results, discussion and conclusion. Reviewers are encouraged to evaluate the items as formulated by the CONSORT (Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials), STROBE (STrengthening the Reporting of OBservational studies in Epidemiology), TREND (Transparent Reporting of Evaluations with Nonrandomized Designs), COREQ (CONsolidated criteria for REporting Qualitative research) or CReDECI (Criteria for Reporting the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions) for complex interventions. But reviewers also can use their own structure, which of course, is acceptable as long as they make a systematic evaluation of the scientific quality. Reviewers are encouraged to comment on the whole of the manuscript, from ‘title to references’, and address issues such as: Are the research aims/questions clear? Is the design/method appropriate? Are data appropriately collected, analyzed and reported? Are the conclusions justified by the results?

3. Relevance and novelty

A good peer review evaluates the relevance of the presented material for the readers of the *European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing*. Although the scope of the journal is the broad field of cardiovascular nursing, including acute and chronic care, cardiac rehabilitation, primary and secondary prevention, of adults and children as well as families, reviewers are expected to comment on the relevance of this particular manuscript for the readership. Manuscripts can be relevant regarding all aspects of cardiovascular nursing care: education, research (including methodological development), patient care or organizational aspects. Reviewers might encourage authors who report local or specific data to broaden their introduction and discussion in order to make this generalizable and applicable to the wider international audience. A good peer review

also considers the originality, significance and rigour of the manuscript and addresses what this particular manuscript adds to the existing body of science at this point in time. Considering novelty and originality makes reviewing for the European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing a dynamic process. A manuscript that might have been accepted in 2001 might not be accepted in 2013, due to the evolution in science and publication. Reviewing relevance and novelty also means that the reviewers may suggest other literature sources to authors. Since reviewers are viewed as experts in the field, they might be able to identify articles that have slipped the minds of authors.

To conclude, the success of the European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing heavily relies on our ability to publish articles of highest quality. High quality peer reviews is a very important link in supporting editors to choose the most relevant publications to publish and in helping authors to improve their manuscript to the highest possible level. We hope that these recommendations will be useful for reviewers and authors in the preparation or evaluation of manuscripts.

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