Some things to do and not to do

Colin G. Orton, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
Wayne State University
Detroit, MI

The review

The main purpose of the review process is not to reject a manuscript but to make suggestions as to how to improve it

What if you have already reviewed this paper?

• Let the Editor know if you have already reviewed this paper for another journal but still go ahead and review it if the author has made the suggested changes
  • if the changes have not been made simply reject the paper and let the Editor know why
  • you don’t need to tell this to the author, the Editor will do it
What not to do

• Do not accept an assignment to referee a paper if you cannot do it in a timely fashion
  • typically, if you can’t do it within 2 - 3 weeks then say no
  • it’s unfair to the author (and the Editor) if you hold up publication excessively

Review times for Medical Physics

1st Cycle Review Times

Time from when the Associate Editor is identified to completion of reviews

The 2nd cycle review

• Don’t hold up publication by taking too long for the 2nd review
  • just check that the author has made all the changes you recommended (or adequately explained why not)
  • always do this within one week if possible
**Don't be cruel!**

- The author has put lots of work and time into this so don't say things in your review like "this is utter nonsense" or "of no earthly value", etc.
- *by all means say this to the Editor in confidence but not to the author*

---

**Some things to do**

- Watch out for plagiarism
- Plagiarism* is the use of text or other items (figures, images, tables) without permission or acknowledgment of the source of these materials

Common forms of plagiarism

- Reproducing, word-for-word, sentences of others, and often complete paragraphs
- Reproducing figures and illustrations without indicating the source
- Problem: with electronic publications it's too easy to copy-and-paste

What else watch out for

- Are the conclusions statistically significant?
  - *has the author even tried to find out if they are statistically significant?*

Has the theory section already been published elsewhere?

- Many authors reproduce their theory section in several papers
- Better to simply state the basic theory and give a reference
- Most readers will already have read the theory elsewhere anyway, so why waste reader’s time and energy (and journal space) reproducing it here
What to look for in the Discussion section

- Has the author attempted to explain or justify unexpected results?
- Is there excessive redundancy with the Results section?
- Are all the claims made in the Discussion warranted by the results?

What to look for in the References

- Has the author given appropriate recognition of the work of others?
- Has the author adhered to the reference style of the journal?
  - if not, then it’s likely that the paper was originally sent to another journal first and was rejected
  - tell the author in your review that the reference style is wrong and tell the Editor