

Reviewer Guidelines

Being invited to review a manuscript is an honour because it reflects your eminence in a particular aspect of surgery. The Editors are indebted to you for ensuring that we continue to improve the standard of articles that appear in the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*. We appreciate that, whilst reviewing manuscripts has its own intrinsic rewards, it is an onerous task. So, at the end of each year, we express our gratitude by publishing a list of the reviewers for that year.

The ANZ Journal of Surgery follows the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication" (www.ICMJE.org). The Uniform Requirements state the ethical principles in the conduct and reporting of research and provide recommendations relating to specific elements of editing and writing. Reviewers should be aware of the content of this document. In addition, the Journal requires authors to comply with "Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: A Publisher's Perspective" at www.blackwellpublishing.com/publicationethics. When reporting experiments on either human subjects or animals, authors must provide evidence that the research was in accordance with appropriate ethical standards. Reviewers should notify the editorial office if they have concerns about the ethical standards of a manuscript. Reviewers are often in the best position to recognise manuscripts that contain material that has already been published (redundant / duplicate publications).

The ANZ Journal of Surgery supports the process of peer review. This means that the Journal relies on reviewers to determine the suitability of manuscripts for publication. Two referees are asked to comment on each original article and, if it is thought necessary, other referees may be asked their opinion. No reviewer should be asked to comment on more than ten manuscripts a year. Reviewers are sent copies of the comments of other reviewers and they are informed of the final editorial decision. Under no circumstance should a reviewer make direct contact with an author (any concerns must be directed to the editorial staff). The Editorial Board of the ANZ Journal of Surgery greatly appreciates the significant commitment and time that it takes to review a manuscript. Reviewers are listed and publicly thanked in the last issue of the Journal each year.

Reviewers are responsible for maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the authors' work whilst it is being evaluated for publication. Manuscripts sent for review are privileged communications and are the private property of the authors. Reviewers must destroy copies of the manuscripts, both paper and digital, after completing their review. Also, information gained through working with manuscripts must not be used for private gain in any way. Reviewers must disclose all relationships that could be viewed as presenting a potential conflict of interest. Conflicts of interest can occur because of financial relationships, personal relationships, academic competition, and intellectual passion.

It is the responsibility of reviewers to critically evaluate manuscripts. Nevertheless, it is important that reviewers adopt a positive and impartial attitude toward the manuscript under review, with the aim of enhancing the quality of the manuscript. Reviewers are in a privileged position and must avoid using language that is either emotive or derogatory.

Provide an introductory paragraph

Start with a brief summary that covers the objectives of the manuscript, the type of study design, the potential overall contribution to either surgical practice or the basic surgical sciences, your impression of the main strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript, and the overall quality of the manuscript (including its length and the use of English). Reviewers should not submit corrections for spelling and grammar mistakes, instead they should encourage authors of poorly

worded manuscripts to seek assistance. If a manuscript is poorly written, but contains important information, reviewers should suggest referral to a professional editing service as mentioned in the Author Guidelines – a list of independent suppliers of editing services can be found at www.blackwellpublishing.com/bauthor/english_language.asp. Finally, whenever necessary, insist that manuscripts are compliant with the details provided in the ‘Author Guidelines’.

Provide a list of numbered comments

The introductory paragraph should be followed by numbered comments that address specific issues (the numbering facilitates correspondence with the author). The following brief comments may help you to provide a detailed review:

- Many reviewers neglect to mention either the title or the summary. This is unfortunate because some titles fail to indicate the disposition of the study; and, because readers often screen articles on the web via search engines such as PubMed, the summary is often the only part of the article that is read. It is crucial that summaries are succinct and contain hard data.
- It is important that articles are easily accessible on the web. Check that the key words are taken from those recommended by the US National Library of Medicine's Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) browser list www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/meshhome.html.
- The Introduction should briefly explain why the manuscript has been written and, certainly for original articles, conclude with a short description of the authors' objectives.
- The Methods should be presented in sufficient detail for an interested reader to replicate the study. If you are concerned about the methods used to analyse data, including the use of statistics, then suggest review by a biostatistician.
- The Results should be concise and contain the results of appropriate statistical analysis. Comment critically on the quality and need for illustrations and tables. Data that are presented in illustrations and tables should not be duplicated in the text. Suggest additional illustrations that would add clarity to the text.
- The Discussion is the weakest part of many manuscripts. For original articles, Discussions should start with an overall comment about the findings and then critically evaluate the main issues raised by the study. The authors must present a coherent argument for their position. In doing so, it is particularly important that authors respect the integrity of paragraphs (one topic discussed in each paragraph) so that the Discussion flows in an orderly manner. The Discussion should end with conclusions that are both relevant and consistent with the data. It is unacceptable to end manuscripts with vague comments such as ‘further research is needed in this area’.
- References must be relevant and appropriate in number – beware of marginal papers that try to boost their importance by including a long list of unnecessary references. Reviewers should be alert to the absence of citations to similar work that have been ignored by the authors.

Make a recommendation about suitability for publication

Reviewers are asked to make recommendations about the suitability of manuscripts for publication (very few papers qualify for an immediate unconditional acceptance). Reviewers must not include editorial opinions (comments about acceptance, rejection, or the need for revision) to the author. Suggested revisions should be stated as such and not expressed as conditions of acceptance, because

to do otherwise would corrupt the process of peer review. Reviewers often disagree and even manuscripts that are thought to be acceptable by a handling editor may not be published because of a lack of space. Ultimate decisions about the content of the Journal rest with the Editor-in-Chief.

Submit your report

Timeliness is important. Reviews should be completed within four weeks online via Manuscript Central (<http://anzjs.manuscriptcentral.com/>). If this is not possible, or the paper is not in your area of expertise, alternative arrangements will be made if you notify the editorial office (it would help us if you provided the contact details of an alternative reviewer). You will be notified of the outcome of the editorial process when a final decision is made.

Thank you again for the important contribution you are about to make to the *ANZ Journal of Surgery*.

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