

Editorial

Reviewing: Benefits and Barriers

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I was recently asked to be a panel member for a Research Lunch and Learn along with two other authors. I found the issue of finding quality reviewers and the editor experiences with reviewers was similar across the panel. Reviewers are essential to the publication of a quality referred journal. Those who review do so for mainly altruistic reasons, primarily to benefit the discipline. However, there are benefits to the individual.

First and foremost, reviewing can help you with your own scholarship. You soon get a sense of what constitutes a quality manuscript and what is pertinent to the fit of that journal. You can identify variations in how fit is decided by reviewing for more than one journal. The majority of journals will give you some sort of template or rubric to use as you assess the manuscript. The assessment is likely to include, what is needed for that journal, and these characteristics are often covered in the author guidelines. The review is also an evaluation of the science reported in the article. Journal reviewing can have other less direct benefits, such as adding depth to your curriculum vita or resume. In some institutions, reviewing is counted as scholarship on a clinical ladder. Finally, reviewing will help you keep abreast in your field. You will be reading what is new and adding to the science in the area in which you practice or do your own research.

Barriers to reviewing may include a lack of knowledge about where to find the opportunity. This barrier is easily overcome, contact a journal that you read or that covers topics that you are interested in and contact the editor. Here at the *Online Journal of Rural Nursing and Health Care* we are always looking for new reviewers or reviewers with areas of expertise in specific topics within rural health care, education, policy, or research methods and analysis. You will be sent a

form to complete that provides information about yourself such as work affiliation, position, credentials, contact information, and topic areas you would be most interested in reviewing. Finally, you list your publications or presentations that may indicate your area of expertise. Dr. Ann Graves, Associate Editor and myself use these forms to set up your profile in the management software system. Then we can search through the system for people whose areas of research or clinical expertise match with the manuscript being submitted. The match may be along the lines of clinical topics but it may also include specific methodology or analysis knowledge. The reviewer knowledge may be on policy in the area if appropriate to the topic. The final barrier is one we all battle, and that is finding the time to conduct a quality review. The more reviewers at the editor's disposal, the less any one author has to be called upon. Reviewing does not take an inordinate amount of time but needs to be done in a timely manner. If something comes up that indicates you will not be able to meet the preset deadline, contact the editor who will most often be able to allow a bit more time for the review.

Whether you suggest acceptance for publication, revisions, or rejection, one goal is that the authors can use the feedback to improve the quality of their work. Giving kind but unbiased feedback is important for the growth of nurse scientists and authors. Journals usually have some mechanism for providing this type of feedback. One important element is that the feedback must remain double blinded so the authors do not know who is doing the review, just as they do not get author information.

If you are interested in reviewing for the Online Journal of Rural Nursing and Health Care, please contact either Dr. Pam Stewart Fahs, Editor-in-Chief at psfahs@binghamton.edu or Dr. Barbara Ann Graves, Associate Editor at agaves@ua.edu