

# Guidelines for Reviewers

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*Tokyo Women's Medical University Journal* (TWMUJ) supports and adheres to the guidelines and best practices including Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (<http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>) by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and the Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing [a joint statement by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the World Association for Medical Editors (WAME) and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA); <http://doaj.org/bestpractice>].

The sections below provide general guidelines for reviews. If you have any questions, please contact the Tokyo Women's Medical University Journal Editorial Office.

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## I. Peer Review Process

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TWMUJ publishes articles that are original and rigorous, and uphold high ethical standards. Articles must demonstrate their interest and significance to the journal's international readership. TWMUJ publishes clinical studies that provide insight into the therapy of diseases.

### 1. Acceptance Criteria

The journal aims to publish articles that in the field. The journal has explicit acceptance criteria, which are used to determine the suitability of the articles for publication. The following aspects are considered.

- **Scope:** about a research or clinical aspect of medical science.
- **Basic technical elements:** we determine if the manuscript adheres to journal policies on ethical standards, language, authorship, trial registration, nomenclature, etc., as described in the Instructions to Authors; if it contains explicit statements about research and publication ethics, as per the Instructions to Authors and elsewhere; and if it attains an English standard that allows for peer review.
- **Scientific rigor:** we assess if the underlying research as described meets community standards; if there are identifiable experimental, technical or other deficiencies; and if the interpretations are consistent with the data.
- **Novelty:** we assess if the manuscript represents original research; if it has a novel approach, data or other aspect; if it presents a new application of an existing technique; or describes a completely new technique or conceptual advance. We also assess if any new insights are well presented (e.g. in Review articles).
- **Interest:** we determine if the manuscript's topic or area is of broad interest and has been placed in a broader context; and we judge its interest to the various research, clinical and other members of our audience.
- **Significance and importance:** we consider various aspects, such as if a newly described

method will be widely used; if the work represents a substantial advance or is incremental; if the manuscript elucidates the underlying mechanism of the phenomenon being reported (where relevant); and if clinical studies provide substantial insight into diseases and their therapies.

- **Context and presentation:** we assess if the manuscript is well structured and placed within a broader context; and if changes to the manuscript could improve accessibility, interest or appreciation of the significance of the work.

## 2. Editorial and Peer Review Process

The journal has a transparent process for peer review and editorial decision-making, which is outlined below.

1. **Submission of Manuscript:** The author submits a manuscript and it receives a unique identification number.
2. **Editorial Office Assessment:** The Editorial Office checks the manuscript's formatting and style is in accordance with the [Instructions to Authors](#).
3. **Initial Decision:** The Editor-in-Chief (EIC) screens the manuscript and decides whether or not to send it for full peer review. If the decision is not to send the manuscript for review, the EIC sends a decision letter via e-mail with the decision of rejection.
4. **EIC Assigns an Associate Editor (AE):** If the EIC decides to send the manuscript for a full peer review, the EIC assigns an AE.
5. **Invitation to Reviewers:** The AE sends invitations to individuals he or she believes would be appropriate reviewers. As responses are received, further invitations are issued, if necessary, until the required number (two or three) of acceptances is obtained.
6. **Response to Invitations:** Invited reviewers consider the invitation against their own expertise, conflicts of interest and availability. They then accept or decline. If possible, when declining, they might also suggest alternative reviewers.
7. **Submission of Peer Review Report:** Reviewers submit their review to the journal.
8. **Recommendation by AE:** AE reviews all returned reviewers' reports and submits a recommendation and the reviews to the EIC.
9. **Communication of Decision:** EIC considers the reviewers' and AE's reports, makes a decision, and then sends the decision e-mail to the author.
10. **Next Steps:** If accepted, the manuscript is sent to production. If rejected or sent back for either major or minor revision, the author revises the manuscript according to the review comments and resubmits. If the manuscript was sent back for revision, reviewers should expect to receive a new version, unless they have opted out of further participation. However, where only minor changes were requested, the re-review might be done by the AE. In addition, the EIC may choose to accept the paper without further review by the reviewers.

### 2.1 Initial Decision

The decision on whether to send the manuscript for peer review is based on the EIC's assessment of the basic scientific rigor, novelty and significance of the manuscript. Manuscripts are returned to authors if there are clear errors or problems with the research described or it is not clearly described; if the research overlaps with other published research or is uninterestingly incremental;

or if the research is clearly of limited significance.

## **2.2 Reviewer Selection**

AEs are careful to select the most appropriate reviewers to peer review manuscripts. Invited reviewers are experienced, knowledgeable and able researchers and clinicians within the specific subject area of the manuscript. AE prefers reviewers who respond promptly, follow the journal's reviewing guidelines, and provide detailed reports.

When submitting a manuscript to the journal, authors may suggest reviewers that they would like included in or excluded from the peer review process. The AE will consider authors' suggestions of reviewers to include or avoid, but reserves the right to make their own decision on whom to invite. Peer review is single-blind, so the reviewers remain anonymous to the authors. They are only revealed upon explicit request by the reviewer.

## **2.3 Decision after Peer Review**

After peer review, the AE considers the reviewers' reports and their own manuscript assessment against the journal's acceptance criteria. Based on their assessments, the AE can take two paths. First, they may ask the authors to make revisions to the manuscript and re-submit for further assessment; the AE then handles the re-review process to a point where they are able to make a final accept or reject recommendation to the EIC. The AE may choose to send them for re-review by one or more of the original reviewers.

Second, the AE may recommend accept or reject to the EIC given the content of the reviewers' reports.

## **2.4 Final Decision**

The EIC makes the final decision, which usually concurs with the AE's recommendation. However, the EIC considers all the information available as well higher level concerns such as the competition across all submissions for the limited space in the journal, and the journal's overall aims and ambitions. If necessary, the EIC discusses with the AE, and other subject specialists on the Editorial Board, the strength of the imperative to publish the manuscript and other relevant factors.

## **3. Revised Manuscript**

It is expected that any manuscripts receiving a revision decision will be fully amended according to the comments of both the reviewers and the editors. Authors must also include a detailed point-by-point response letter. Authors should also submit the revised manuscript within the following period:

- Manuscripts evaluated as Minor Revision: 20 days from the date of prior decision
- Manuscripts evaluated as Major Revision: 30 days from the date of prior decision
- Invited paper: 30 days from the date of prior decision

Revisions must be approved by all authors prior to the submission of the revised manuscript. Authors are asked to return a revised manuscript within a reasonable timeframe, otherwise their manuscript will be treated as a new submission.

#### **4. Editors and Journal Staff as Authors**

Manuscripts submitted by editors, Editorial Board members, or journal staff will follow the same process as outlined above. However, they are excluded from any editorial decision process of their own manuscript and have neither access to that manuscript nor any information about the review process other than what is provided in the editor's decision letter. Additionally, ScholarOne, the journal's online submission and peer review system, has been designed to blind a person in other roles (editor/reviewer) from any paper they have authored. The manuscript submitted by editors, Editorial Board, and journal staff of TWMUJ should include a statement that declares their personal conflict of interest with the journal.

## **II. Ethical Responsibilities of Reviewers**

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### **1. Timeliness**

We advise our authors that reviews for new submissions are expected within three weeks from the day reviewers have agreed to review the manuscript. If it is not possible for you to meet this timeframe, please contact the Editorial Office immediately so that the editor can decide whether to extend the time or assign an alternate reviewer. We appreciate your review comments for revised manuscripts within 10 days from the day you agreed to re-review.

### **2. Conflict of Interest for Reviewers**

Reviewers must inform the editor of any potential conflicts of interest before beginning the review process. If you are or have been involved in any part of the research presented in the assigned manuscript, including but not limited to, financial interests, collaborating with the authors, other relationships or connections, both professional or personal, with any of the authors, companies, or institutions related to the manuscript, which might prevent you from providing a fair and unbiased review, you should decline the role of reviewer and inform the editor so that another individual can be invited to review the manuscript.

### **3. Confidentiality**

The review process must remain strictly confidential.

- Do not discuss or mention the contents of the paper before or after the review process.
- The manuscript submitted for peer-review is a privileged document. All materials must be treated in confidence. If additional advice from a colleague or any parties is thought to be helpful, please contact the Editorial Office in advance to obtain permission from the editor. Do not pass the manuscript on to your colleagues or other third parties without first obtaining consent from the editor.
- Before publication, the research described in the paper cannot be referred to in the reviewer's own work. You must refrain from citing or referring to the work before it has been published.
- Do not retain copies of reviewed manuscripts and do not use the knowledge of their contents or take scientific, financial, personal, or other advantage of material available to you through the peer review process.

#### **4. Constructive Comments**

Provide objective and constructive feedback in your review to encourage the author to improve the paper and their writing. When you find negative aspects, suggest concrete means for improvement. Refrain from being hostile or inflammatory and from making derogatory personal comments.

#### **5. Impartiality**

Reviewer comments should be based on an impartial consideration of the facts, exclusive of personal or professional bias. All comments should be based solely on the paper's scientific merit, originality, and quality of writing as well as on the relevance to the TWMUJ's scope and mission, without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, religion, or citizenship of the authors. If you determine that you have a potential bias during the review of the paper, please contact the editor immediately.

#### **6. Competence**

You should accept an assignment to review only if you have adequate expertise to provide an authoritative assessment. If you think certain aspects of a manuscript are outside your expertise or realize that your expertise is limited, you should contact the Editorial Office so that we can decide whether you should continue and address your areas of expertise only or whether to assign an alternate reviewer(s).

#### **7. Manuscripts You Have Previously Handled**

If you are invited to assess a manuscript you previously reviewed for another journal, please consider the manuscript as a new submission. In such case, the authors may have made changes according to the previous review comments, and the TWMUJ's criteria for evaluation may differ from those of the other journal.

#### **8. Ethical Policies**

Please note any suspicious evidence of the ethical misconducts and bring it to the attention of the editor immediately. Please see our general publication ethics policies [here](#).

### **III. Invitation for Peer Review**

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#### **1. Peer Review System**

Reviewer invitations are sent by e-mail from ScholarOne Manuscripts. Use the links in the e-mail to accept or decline the invitation to review. The invitation includes manuscript details, such as the title, the names of authors and the abstract, which may help you to determine whether the subject of the manuscript is within your areas of expertise.

If you are unable to agree to review a manuscript, please click the decline link in the e-mail. In such cases, it would be appreciated if you could suggest another potential reviewer.

If you click the link to accept the invitation to review a manuscript, you will receive a notification via e-mail about how to log-in to our online system to access the manuscript in PDF or HTML format, and instructions for submitting your comments through the online system.

## **2. Comments to the Editor**

In ScholarOne Manuscripts, there is a section titled “Comments to the Editor”. Your comments entered in this section will be seen only by the editors. The comments will not be sent to the authors. If there are any possible conflicts of interest, ethical issues, or any other comment you wish not to be shared with the authors, please comment in this section.

## **3. Comments to the Authors**

Your peer review comments should include an introductory paragraph, which includes your overall impression of the paper. This paragraph should be followed by specific comments, which may be divided into two sections such as major and minor points. Your comments are sent to the author as a part of the decision letter. However, please keep in mind that it is inappropriate to include any statements related to the acceptance or rejection of the paper. On rare occasions, we may edit reviewer reports to remove any offensive language or comments that reveal confidential information about other matters.

## **4. Decisions on Manuscript Publication**

All decisions on the manuscript publication, which include acceptance, major or minor revisions, or rejection, are made by the editors of TWMUJ when all the reviewer and editor reports are submitted and evaluated.

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