

Why all doctors and health researchers should be peer-reviewers

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The Malaysian Family Physician is a peer-reviewed journal. Peer-review is the process whereby articles are sent to people working in the same field in order for them to appraise the study for methodological and writing quality in order to decide on suitability for publication.¹ These peers should have skills in critical appraisal and research methodology. They should not have any conflicts of interest so editors would usually choose those who are not linked to the authors such as colleagues in the same setting or have previous collaborations. Peer-review is considered to be a mark of quality in that the peer should be the appropriate person to judge the quality of the study.²

It is increasingly difficult to get reviewers for articles. The review process is one that works by a system of honour in that peer-reviewers are not usually paid for their services.¹ There are some incentives in that reviewers get a letter of appreciation from the journal and this can be used as professional performance outcomes such as continuous professional development points for renewal of the annual practicing certificate. The work is not easy. It requires the reviewer to expend effort and time to read, critically appraise and write detailed comments for the authors to revise the paper.² A number of doctors and even researchers do not feel that they are able to pass judgment on the work of others. This means that journals are finding it harder and harder to find reviewers for the submitted articles.

One researcher told me that the number of articles he would review would be at least as many articles that he submits for publication. This is an ethical approach. If we expect our papers to be reviewed, then we should also expect to review the articles of our peers. It is part of our duty to review. Let us get on with it.

References

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2. Mayden KD. Peer Review: Publication's Gold Standard. *J Adv Pract Oncol.* 2012;3(2):117-22.