

## The Critical Role of Journal Reviewers



Any journal relies on voluntary peer reviewers to ensure the quality of research articles. Since reviewers are usually as busy as any of us, their voluntary contribution is especially appreciated by our IJAHP editorial team. Reviewing a paper requires a set of skills, which can be summarized as *Thoroughness, Effectiveness, Timeliness and Quality*.

*Thoroughness* is the ability to review the paper in its entirety and, most importantly, get an understanding of the topic and author's discussion of it. Authors highlight the importance of this ability when they complain that the reviewer "didn't get it." Authors may be at fault for lack of clarity, and it is the role of the reviewer to point this out. Other common situations occur when a reviewer runs out of steam halfway through the paper, or when the reviewer focuses mainly on formatting and minor issues and avoiding –perhaps for lack of time – getting deep into a discussion of the paper.

*Effectiveness* refers to the feedback provided by the reviewer. The feedback must allow the editors to make up their minds regarding inclusion of the paper in the journal, and also allow the authors to improve their paper. Judgments such as "paper is not suitable for this journal," or "literature review is poorly written" are not very helpful. On the other hand, comments such as "should the authors [do this], their paper would be more suitable", or "authors should use a table to summarize [be specific]" provide pointers to the authors about what could be done to improve the paper or in a worst-case scenario, the problems that led to its rejection. Similarly, the review must be useful for the editors who will have to make a final decision on the paper. If the reviewer avoids taking a position on the paper, the editors are left clueless about what to do with it.

*Timeliness* is a very important issue for the editors since it allows them to plan ahead. Also, timeliness helps to avoid the problem of waiting for a reviewer's report without knowing when it will arrive or if it will arrive at all.

Finally, and like in any other activity, the job must be done with *Quality*. If the review is done with high standards of quality, the comments will be on target, clear, well-structured and will allow the authors to improve their paper as well as help the editors make up their minds about whether or not to accept the paper. *Quality* is harder to define but, like the old joke, we will recognize it as soon as we see it.

Since we have moved from publishing two issues a year to three, the reviewer's role has become even more critical for IJAHP success, in particular for this first year of increased production. For this reason, we have decided to honor our reviewers through the selection of four reviewers who exhibit the qualities highlighted above. Please read the "Reviewer Awards" piece in our News and Events section to find out who our honored reviewers are. We did not use a scientific approach for the selection (AHP was definitely not involved), but requested that each editor choose a single exemplary reviewer; therefore, we are certain that several valuable collaborators were not included. Unfortunately, we ca

not give awards to the dozens of colleagues who have contributed such exemplary reviews for our journal. We hope that our honored reviewers constitute rather a representation of all the hard-working reviewers who make this journal possible. To all our reviewers, thank you very much!

Sincerely,  
Enrique Mu, PhD  
Editor-in-Chief