



The publication of an article in a peer-reviewed journal involves the editor, reviewers, authors and readers. The editorial board chooses reviewers and makes the final decision to publish or not. It would be courteous to inform reviewers of the final decisions. In case reviewers' assessments conflict, it would be fair to notify them why one opinion overrode the other.

On the author side, manuscripts sent to reviewers should be anonymous to prevent reviewer bias or prejudice. Some journals (e.g. the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*, *Journal of Pathology*, *Cancer*, *Human Pathology*) publish their papers with the date that the manuscript was first received, the date the revised manuscript was received, and the date of final acceptance. This may seem trivial but it is not; from the author's point of view, it may support a claim to originality (remember the *Gallo v. Montagnier* dispute about the first description of the HIV virus?). From the referees' point of view, it would motivate them not to delay the review procedure (delays can be avoided by requesting referees to review within a definite timeframe).

Some journals (e.g. *Lancet*, *Journal of Pathology*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*) are very strict in their requirements concerning authorship (i.e. individual contribution of each co-author), and some (e.g. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *BMJ* journals, *Journal of Pathology*) about conflict of interest (financial or personal that may inappropriately bias one's actions) and source of funding. Even the involvement of a medical writer or editor should be acknowledged.

To be invited to review a manuscript is an honour and a burden. There are many ways to entice and reward reviewers; for example, *The Lancet* gives a free six-month subscription to the journal; the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* offers a month's free access to *Scopus*; and *Developing World Bioethics* gives a year's free Internet access to the journal.

Lastly: reviewing a paper should qualify as an academic activity (especially for academics) and should be regarded as such by heads of departments and institutions. A nice way to reward reviewers is to publish yearly a list of reviewers (e.g. as done by *Developing World Bioethics*, *Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine*); this could be included in academics' annual reports. CPD points could also be allocated for reviews.

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Suggestions for SAMJ editorial policies

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To the Editor: It's good news that the *SAMJ* is aligning with contemporary international publication demands.¹ This may also be an opportunity to bring *SAMJ* editorial policies into line with international peer-reviewed journals to improve the relationship between the journal and its authors, reviewers and readers.

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1. van Niekerk JP de V. The earth is flat, as are our journals and CPD (From the Editor). *S Afr Med J* 2008; 98(1): 7.