
EDITOR'S PAGE



Shortening the Review Process

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Every author has had the experience of submitting a manuscript to a journal and then waiting for many weeks or months for a review to occur, only to have the manuscript rejected. Alternatively, the manuscript may be rejected after one or more revisions. It is disheartening to authors to then have to submit the manuscript to another journal and go through the same prolonged process. In some cases, a given manuscript may cycle through several journals before being accepted—markedly prolonging the time to publication. From an editor's viewpoint, this process is also unsatisfactory. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find good reviewers who will spend the time and effort necessary to provide the kind of timely review that authors expect when they submit a manuscript to a journal such as *JACC*. Reviewers are overworked because they are receiving so many manuscripts from different journals. In addition, if a given manuscript cycles through several journals, it uses up an inordinate number of reviewers in a very inefficient process.

At the last meeting of the Heart Group (1), we discussed some potential ways in which this process could be improved for both authors and editors. As a beginning step, some journals, including *JACC*, agreed to have a trial evaluation of the following new approach. Authors who have had a manuscript rejected elsewhere could submit their revised manuscript, along with copies of the reviews from the other journal, to a participating journal for more prompt consideration. In some circumstances, the journal could then make a decision based on the previous reviews and the revisions made in the manuscript by the authors. Alternatively, the second journal would have the option to send out the manuscript for one or more reviews if they felt they needed to. In any event, this process might reduce the number of reviewers involved in a given manuscript, and at the same time shorten the process. This may be one step along the way to an overall more efficient review process.

One journal member of the Heart Group, the *American Journal of Cardiology*, has informally been following this general procedure for several years. It also appeared from the discussion that other journals have also occasionally done this,

as we have at *JACC*. So, although it does not represent a totally new approach to reviewing manuscripts, we wish to formalize it a little more so that we can gain greater experience in its use and evaluate its potential benefit to both authors and the Journal. In any event, *JACC* is going to undertake this process, beginning immediately. The elements of this direction are the following:

1. Authors can continue to submit manuscripts to *JACC* in the usual way without reference to previous review or rejection.

2. If authors have a manuscript rejected elsewhere and elect to take this new approach, they should revise their manuscript in accordance with the reviews received from the previous journal and enclose all copies of the correspondence (including the letter of rejection), original manuscript, revised manuscript and reviews for us to evaluate. Please submit four sets of all material. In an accompanying letter to *JACC*, the authors should indicate that the manuscript has been reviewed by another journal(s) and rejected and indicate the sequence of events, including all revisions and correspondence. This will greatly help us in judging the changes made in response to specific criticisms.

3. In some circumstances, we might make a decision based on these previous reviews and correspondence and the revised manuscript. Alternatively, we might ask one or more additional reviewers to review the manuscript before making a final decision. In some circumstances, we may reject the revised manuscript immediately rather than obtain additional reviews.

4. Authors are strongly encouraged to revise their manuscript in accordance with previous reviews. Failure to do so requires the *JACC* office to submit the manuscript to a full review process or an outright rejection. Authors could lose valuable criticism from the previous journal and will not save any time in the review process.

At *JACC* we envision this as a trial effort to assess whether this can reduce some of the time delays in the current review process. After a period of approximately one year, we will reassess the effect that this change has made on the review process. As always, we welcome your comments as we proceed with this trial.

Reference

1. Parmley WW. Redundant publication: response from the Heart Group. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 1997;30:316-7.

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