

Editorial: The Peer Review Process

How the Foot & Ankle Journal edits incoming manuscripts



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The definition of a true peer-reviewed journal is one that regularly screens manuscripts by individuals who are experts in their own fields.¹ It can also be scrutinized by reviewers who are not part of the editorial staff, such as in funded studies.^{1,2} In our journal, the members of the editorial staff are the peer reviewers.

Each editor in our journal has a particular area of expertise. Most, if not all of our editors, have years of experience in research and manuscript editing. All members of our editorial staff have written a number of journal articles. Some members also sit on other editorial boards for other journals. These include the sectional editorial staff of *The Journal of Foot & Ankle Surgery* and the advisory editorial staff of the *Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association*.

We do not see this as a conflict of interest, but rather a shared effort to improve the quality of manuscript submissions and a joint effort to help stimulate case reports and studies in our field of expertise.

The function of our peer review process is to aid and 1) improve the quality of manuscript content, 2) encourage authors to meet the highest quality standards of the manuscript, 3) provide a readable manuscript without grammatical or typographical errors and 4) provide ideas to stimulate further research and study.

When our journal receives a manuscript, it is rarely rejected. But not all manuscripts are accepted at the initial submission. Sometimes, many revisions take place that include edits to the content and to the body of the manuscript. We try not to entirely rewrite a manuscript, but rather, provide information on how to improve the body of work and its presentation.

Manuscripts submitted to *The Foot & Ankle Journal* are submitted by electronic media. This is usually done by simple electronic mail or *e-mail*. Our [information for authors](#) section of the site illustrates this process. In short, e-mail manuscripts should include the title and body of the work. High quality resolution photos should be sent separately from the manuscript. Captioning can be included in the original manuscript.

The initial manuscript including photos and captions are reviewed by the chief publisher. This is called a *preliminary edit*. In the preliminary editing process, content and presentation of a case report or study is determined. Also, a brief initial edit of grammatical and spelling errors is performed.

Once the preliminary edit is complete, the manuscript is sent to two of our editors on the editorial board. This is called the *initial edit*. In the initial editing process, the entire body of work is reviewed including photo presentation, captions, content and referencing.

When the initial editing is complete, the entire manuscript is then reviewed by the Publisher and sent to the entire editorial board for *final review*. In the final review, the entire board looks over content issues, content presentation, photo presentation and captioning. A final grammatical and spelling review is also completed. When the final review is complete, the manuscript is formatted and uploaded by the *copy editor* or *publisher* for open access publication to our website, www.faoj.org.

The *publisher* is ultimately responsible for the quality and selection of manuscripts chosen and accepted by the journal. This decision is based on review and suggestions from the other editors on the board.

To preserve the integrity of the peer review process, submitting authors will not know the initial reviewer and in some cases, our review board is not aware of who reviewed the manuscript in the initial edit. This is called a *masked review*.¹

In a masked or even double-masked review, the editors don't know who edited the work before they receive the manuscript. This is strictly enforced by the publisher to ensure a non-biased edit of the manuscript.

One advantage to open access publishing in peer review is the ability to form *dynamic peer review* and suggestions. When a manuscript is uploaded to the *Foot & Ankle Journal*, at the end of the article in the HTML format, there is an area for open discussion and suggestions (i.e. leave a reply). This will also improve overall understanding and quality of a published case report.

The most common complaint of the peer review process is that it is *time intensive*. Many authors complain that some journals take months or even years to edit a manuscript. This can discourage and frustrate the author or authors of a well written manuscript. Many times, content editing will mean re-writing the manuscript, sometimes many times over.

The introduction of this journal as the 'first open access journal for foot and ankle medicine and surgery' has all but eliminated this frustration. Through electronic media and open access publication, our journal is able to edit a manuscript in a relatively short period of time. Average editing takes roughly two weeks. Our journal content includes mostly case report and study information. This also greatly aids in our ability to publish in a short period of time.

The entire process from submission to online publishing may take less than four weeks. We are able to publish some articles within one to two weeks of submission. This mostly depends on the content and length of the manuscript.

Our peer review process is designed to improve the process of online publishing and make the process less frustrating for authors. We assume that all manuscripts submitted are without fraud, plagiarism and bias.

Peer review has been the accepted process of review and manuscript submission in the modern scientific community. Many articles presented to scientific journals before the twentieth century were not peer-reviewed except for medical peer reviews.¹ The peer review journal is an excellent indicator to the quality, content and presentation of the respective journal.

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Publisher/Editor, The Foot & Ankle Journal

References:

1. Wikipedia, Peer Review, [[online](#)].
2. WAME Policy Statements: Definition of a Peer-Reviewed Journal, [[online](#)].