

Table. Tips for peer-review provided by members of the EONS Research Working Group

Expert reviewer	Tips for peer-review
<p>Dr Eva Pape</p> <p>Ghent University Hospital, Belgium</p>	<p><u>Deciding whether or not to review?</u></p> <p>I am a junior reviewer and while it is enjoyable to review an article, it is time-consuming, and the deadlines are sometimes quite tight. I do understand this, as it is nice as an author to get quick feedback on your submitted article.</p> <p>First, I look at the purpose of the article and then I decide if it falls within my scope of practice. I also look at the methodology of the article to see if I am familiar with it. Upon agreement, I look at the guidelines for reviewers.</p> <p><u>Abstract</u></p> <p>First, I read the abstract. The information in the abstract should provide enough information to get a clear overview of the article.</p> <p><u>Body of the article</u></p> <p>Then I read the article to get a better picture. In general, I look at the quality and originality. In addition, it is important to see a contribution to (nursing) practice.</p> <p><u>Introduction</u></p> <p>Is the problem statement clear to me? And are the purpose and objectives described in detail?</p> <p><u>Methods</u></p> <p>Review the methods section and the quality of the article. The methodology chosen should be appropriate for the purpose. This section should be described in detail and consistent with the EQUATOR network reporting guidelines.</p> <p><u>Results</u></p> <p>Check that the results are clearly written. Review the tables/figures and see if they provide additional information rather than just a copy of the text.</p> <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>See if the discussion section is critically written. A very important aspect for me is the implications for (nursing) practice and this should be described in detail in the discussion section.</p> <p><u>Giving feedback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by giving a general comment on the article. • Give constructive feedback and always be respectful in the way you write your feedback for the authors. <p>In your feedback, distinguish between major and minor aspects.</p>
<p>Dr Cherith Semple</p> <p>Ulster University, United Kingdom</p>	<p>CONSIDERING THE TASK: Peer reviewing academic papers in health and social science is about advancing and informing evidence-based care, therefore it should be undertaken by subject and methodological experts to ensure a 'quality process'. Therefore, my first point is to only provide peer-review if the paper is within your scope of subject and or methodological expertise. Secondly, it takes time to give careful and considerate peer review, so ensure you have the time to undertake the task in a timely manner.</p> <p>CONDUCTING PEER REVIEW: When I'm reviewing a paper I'm avidly considering the following three aspects: 1) Originality of the work, 2) significance or impact the research will have on practice and the 3) rigour (coherence, integrity, robustness) of the research.</p>

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	<p>My starting place is initially reading the entire paper to get an overall 'picture' of the work that is being presented. The abstract should be stand alone, giving the reader insight into the problem (purpose), the aim, how it was addressed, key findings, how the research will influence practice and a 'so what' /conclusion. After the first read of the paper, which will enable you to formulate an overview of paper, next, read it again, noting down salient strengths and weaknesses of the paper and seeking to assess <i>originality of the work – does this research make a contribution to the current knowledge base?</i> Is there new empirical findings, new interpretations and insights or theory being advanced. It should be noted that there is a clear place for adapting and testing of interventions (adding to the current evidence base), plus revisiting areas were there been a change in practice, policy or related evidence which can also add value. Then I consider the <i>rigour of the paper</i>, which is really important. The methods section should be precise and detailed with consistency between the research question and research methods. Key aspects being assessed will be design, sampling, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations/ approval. This should follow the reporting guidelines for the respective methodology - are all criteria for reporting the study methods addressed? I.e. EQUATOR network.</p> <p>It is also important to answer the question, as part of peer review, what impact the research will have on practice (<i>significance</i>). Has the authors outlined the implications for practice or policy (future research, education). At this point I am taking cognisance if the research findings / results are likely to inform evidence-based practice in the real life context. Also, it is impotant to ascertain if the authors have insightfully articulate the limitations inherent within the research – all research has limitations.</p> <p>CONCLUSION – make every effort to be courteous with your feedback – offer feedback in a respectful and professional tone that will help the author see the strengths of the paper and how the paper could be improved – REMEMBER – the process is to enhance the quality of the paper and scientific rigour of the research.</p>
<p>Prof Karin Dieperink</p> <p>University of Southern Denmark, Denmark</p>	<p>As soon as I had published just one article, I was asked to be a reviewer. Before I had together with my Ph.D. supervisor tried to review one paper. As I have published more over the years, I am now asked several times a week. This is much more than I can handle as it is very time-consuming and unpaid work, so I have decided to review the number of articles a year that I expect to publish myself. Sometimes I say yes to a certain journal because it is highly ranked, or I have the intention to submit a paper later to that specific journal.</p> <p>Making a review is not an exact science but is also about personal preferences. However, I still think that you should try to achieve a high scientific standard, depending on the different methods. Now I always try to include my Ph.D. students in one or two review processes during their Ph.D. I have enjoyed following the guideline: Lovejoy et al 2011, Reviewing Manuscripts for Peer-Review Journals: A Primer for Novice and Seasoned Reviewers. Ann. Behave. Med. 42:1-13</p> <p>A few recommendations from Lovejoy et al (2011):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select no more than two to three areas of expertise.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before acceptance – identify all financial or other conflicts of interest. • Keep the time frame. • Read through the entire manuscript once to assess the overall “tone” get the big picture. • Read it again and note comments – strengths and weaknesses. • Skim salient published articles if the manuscript is based on a previously published dataset to assess the overlap, ensuring the manuscript answers novel research questions. • For some methods checklists are meant to be followed e.g. CONSORT. • Maintain a professional and respectful tone throughout the review and offer feedback that improves the scientific merit of the manuscript. • Reviewers need not comment on all aspects of a manuscript e.g. statistical analyses or specific techniques beyond their expertise. • Begin with the manuscript title and a brief synopsis of the article. Reviewers must clearly distinguish major concerns (those that threaten the validity of the study, expose theoretical confusion, or reveal a mistaken use of a particular statistical technique) from minor concerns that can be corrected (an additional analysis, an addition of a study to the literature review) • The opening paragraph describes the reviewer’s overall opinion of the manuscript and should highlight both the manuscript’s strengths and weaknesses. Major concerns generally conclude the opening paragraph. Number the concerns. <p>Title and abstract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the title and abstract accurately reflect the manuscript as a whole, in particular the findings? <p>The introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An argument that favors the conduct of the study. A literature review followed by a priori research hypotheses. <p>Method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine if the authors’ choice of methodological and data analytic techniques are appropriate for the research question, even if the question could be answered with other methods. Is sufficient detail provided in the method section to allow others researchers to replicate the study. <p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the results presented in a clear and concise manner? Not only the significant findings. Results in a table or figure warrant exclusion from the text. All variables included in analyses should have been described in the method section. <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This section offers the “how” and “why” explanation for study findings. Reviewers should determine if authors have presented plausible explanations for their findings. Study limitations should also be identified and discussed. Focus should be on the meaning of the findings rather than on the objective findings. <p>Tables and figures</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They should improve the readability of the manuscript and accessibility of complex constructs. <p>Sending in the review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication recommendation to the Action Editor • Confidential comments may concern manuscript readability, statistical questions and concerns or alternative publications outlets for which reviewers feel the manuscript may be better suited. <p>Reviewing manuscripts can help reviewers improve the quality of their own manuscripts, and skills improves over time.</p>
<p>Dr Sara Colomer-Lahiguera</p> <p>Lausanne University Hospital, Switzerland</p>	<p>When peer-reviewing I have a list of questions that I ask myself.</p> <p>Maybe an obvious one: when accepting to review, am I confident enough with the topic and the literature?</p> <p>Once I accept, I check the scope of the journal and its requirements.</p> <p>To start...</p> <p>First, I always like to have a global overview of the paper, how the manuscript is structured, especially the results. Are the results divided in subsections, and what are the titles. Are there tables? Figures? Supplementary material?</p> <p>Second, the purpose of the paper. I usually write the objective(s) on a sheet of paper next to me, so I can have them all the time available without scrolling or turning pages.</p> <p>If there is a research question it also goes here.</p> <p>Third, the title. Is the title informative based on the research questions / purpose?</p> <p>Sometimes I do a quick search (google / PubMed) based on the keywords to see the most recent literature on the topic.</p> <p>And I ask myself: Is the question addressed in the manuscript indeed relevant?</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <p>Do the main elements/concepts of the title and objectives appear in the introduction? Are all the major concepts addressed and explained?</p> <p>Do we have enough context to understand the problem?</p> <p>Is the text clear, concise, precise? Scientific writing?</p> <p>Is the research question / purpose clearly stated?</p> <p>Methods:</p> <p>Are the methods appropriate for the purpose?</p> <p>Did the authors use Guidelines for reporting? (COREQ, SRQR, STROBE, CONSORT, etc...) or if it's a review, did they follow any specific methodology and PRISMA (maybe including the link to Equator-network.org. These helped me a lot when I started peer-reviewing)</p> <p>Is the data collection clear? Time, description of how data were collected (support, by whom, etc...)</p> <p>Are the instruments adequately described and referenced? Have the instruments been validated? And validated in this population?</p> <p>Is the data analysis appropriate? (are the choice of stats or qualitative approaches well justified)</p> <p>Results:</p> <p>Is the results section well structured? (logical flow)</p>

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	<p>Are the tables and figures informative? (And clear)</p> <p>Are all the tables and figures properly mentioned in the text and described? (also regarding title, legends, acronyms, symbols, etc)</p> <p>Is there redundancy between visuals and text?</p> <p>Are the data provided informative for the stated purpose of the paper?</p> <p>Basically, do the results answer the research question/objective of the paper?</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <p>Does the first paragraph give a clear overview on the purpose, main results and the main message?</p> <p>Are the main results/findings addressed and discussed against the most recent or relevant literature?</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>Has a (proper) conclusion been drawn? And does the conclusion fit the results?</p> <p>Implications:</p> <p>Do the authors mention clinical implications for the practice / profession, or provide recommendations? Are these recommendations justified by the findings?</p> <p>Strengths and Limitations</p> <p>Do the authors show/prove the relevance, innovation, impact of the results?</p> <p>Are the limitations addressed?</p> <p>Other considerations:</p> <p>Did the study receive ethic approval? Is there any sign of scientific fraud or misconduct?</p> <p>Writing the report:</p> <p>I acknowledge if the topic is relevant for the field.</p> <p>I usually provide a summary of the main objective and main finding of the paper in two three sentences.</p> <p>I comment on the clarity and overall structure of the manuscript (very general, the details come afterwards).</p> <p>I point out the “major comments” or issues that have a fundamental impact, including main concepts and definitions, methodology, substantial re-structuration of some parts.</p> <p>I point out the “minor comments” usually more specific clarifications, or references missing, improvement for the tables or figures, or if something from the text might benefit from some visual support. For this, I usually follow the structure of the paper trying to make it easier for the authors to address my comments.</p> <p>Does it need language editing and proof-reading?</p> <p>Other recommendations for peer-reviewing</p> <p>The first peer-reviews I did were when I was a PhD student together with my supervisor. For students: ask your supervisor to share some of the peer-review requests with you. For supervisors: be a mentor.</p> <p>I keep my reviews as well as the reviews I got as an author as they help me to learn different styles of addressing comments and pointing out issues.</p>

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	Be polite and constructive. At some point we all are reviewers and authors ;)
<p>Dr Amanda Drury</p> <p>Dublin City University, Ireland</p> <p>EONS RWG Co-Chair</p> <p>Associate Editor, Seminars in Oncology Nursing</p>	<p>Abstract: Does the abstract summarize the work well? Is it clear what the aim of the study was, how the study was conducted and what the key findings were? Are the conclusions in the abstract logical with respect to the findings reported? Does the abstract reflect what is reported in the corresponding sections of the manuscript?</p> <p>Introduction: Is previous work in the area well discussed? Is the gap that the study is trying to address explained? Older citations may be included, but there should be a predominance of more recent citations that position the study against the current state of the field. Side note: Also caution readers – novelty/original contribution might not be groundbreaking, studying a phenomenon in a new context/country/clinical setting can add to the literature. Revisiting old concepts where there have been changes in practice, policy or related evidence can add value. Small studies conducted in underserved/rare contexts have value! My advice here always goes back to, do the authors recognize the limitations of their work and interpret the results cautiously in light of these limitations? Secondly, if the authors are conducting a study of an old concept/phenomenon in a new or niche context or setting, do they relate it back to the existing body of evidence (both in the discussion and conclusion).</p> <p>Methods: Is the context of the study explained well? Is the design and any adaptations to the design explained and supported with references? Referring back to reporting guidelines for the respective methodology, are all criteria for reporting the study methods addressed? Point to EQUATOR network. Are the methods all related to each other logically. For example, I have been asked to review papers that claim to have used a complex qualitative methodology, e.g. ethnographic or phenomenological and then undertaken thematic analysis. Or have claimed to use the appropriate analytical approach, but the results presented are descriptive, presenting a summary of quotes, rather than an analysis supported by quotes. Likewise for quantitative, is it possible for the researchers to undertake the analysis they propose with the data they have. For example, conducting a backward multiple regression analysis with multiple variables and 20-30 participants is unlikely to meet the assumptions required for analysis.</p> <p>Results: Does the reporting of results make sense in light of the data collected and the analysis plan? For example, if this was a qualitative study, does the results presented reflect the type of analysis the authors proposed they</p>

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	<p>would undertake? And also, does it reflect the aims of the paper? For example, avoiding the temptation to do an analysis of every piece of data available – are the authors focused on answering the research question. Does the data in the supporting tables/quotes/etc support the narrative results presented?</p> <p>Discussion/conclusions: Are the key findings summarized? Are they interpreted in the context of the wider and related literature? Are the interpretations and recommendations reasonable and related to the findings (i.e. 1. making sure the authors don't over or underestimate the importance/significance of their results; 2. Making sure the recommendations emerge logically from the results). Are the limitations of the study (and their implications) described? Are the implications for future research /policy / practice described?</p>
<p>Dr Gülcan Bağçivan Koç University, Turkey</p>	<p>How I decide to accept the reviewer invitation? -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For several years now I have been receiving tens of reviewer invitation from the journals in a month. I know from my colleagues this is same for most of the researchers. The interesting thing is not all of them from nursing or cancer related journals. It is not possible to accept all of the invitation. I accepted the invitation for the topic that I consider myself as expert. Otherwise, it is not possible for me to review all of them even nursing related topics. <p>Reviewing process;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, I have a quick look to journal guide for preparing manuscript. • Then I start to read the manuscript. First impression is about structure of the manuscript it is important for me to have idea about how it was prepared attentive. • While I read the manuscript I my attention to see if the entire manuscript is clear to understand, if it includes UpToDate and accurate information regarding the topic, if the method was used in the article is sufficient to answer the research question or achieve the aim, if the results were presented in sufficient way and interpreted correctly, if the results were discussed from the point of different perspectives. Highlighting the implication to practice and suggestions for further research are also important. Limitations also important for me to see if authors are aware the limitations. • While I read the manuscript, I take notes on pdf using the sticky notes regarding my suggestions, comments or questions for editor and for the authors. • Then based on my note I write my review letter to editor and authors. I try to be positive and constructive while writing my suggestion and comment regarding the manuscript. I always write my positive impressions first. While suggesting revision I avoid say very general things such us “discussion needs to be rewritten”. I hate this kind of suggestion when I receive for my manuscript. And I think also being a clear about our suggestion to authors is also very important. I try to be explanatory as much as I can with my suggestions.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When I finish my reviewer letter I read the manuscript again to make sure I did not miss anything else and my suggestions are accurate. I also make sure there is no contradiction between what I suggest and what is in the manuscript. • Sometimes I have difficulties to decide the type of revision such as minor or major revision. If there is any guide of the journal for reviewers, I check it but not every journal has. Based on the intensity of required revisions I decide major or minor. • When a journal asks me if I am available to review this manuscript after revision, I usually accept to review it again. • I try to finish reviewing the manuscript on time but sometimes I need extra time. I let the editor know before the deadline if I need extra time.
<p>Dr Paz Fernandez-Ortega</p> <p>University of Barcelona, Spain</p>	<p>When I look at a manuscript, there are 3 points that are essential for me as a reviewer: first, how well the text communicates the research question. Second, how the study was done and how it is reported in the manuscript. Third, how useful the results are for nursing practice.</p> <p>Firstly; the research question is usually not written, but underlies the lines of the manuscript, in fact, the whole text of an original article is written in concordance to it. The research question is expected in all research studies or the hypothesis and it drives to the reader through the importance of the problem (significance).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be written in a concise manner, justifying how important, new, ethical, innovative and relevant is the study. To write this in a concise way usually does not have to be a boring text but attractive, because authors should state the text to attract scientists and future readers and, somehow convince them as well. • Conceptual framework usually guides to good research questions and guides also researchers in the process. <p>Secondly; authors have to communicate how was done the study. The methods section is a very important one. Should be precise, detailed/complete and providing proof that a logical consistency between research question and methods. Design, sampling selection, data collection, how was the analysis, ethics and</p> <p>Finally; last, but not less important, is the question about how the results can be introduced to the clinical practice and how impact to patients, families or professionals in the real context. Sometimes, very innovative studies fail to be realistic in clinical contexts, because they are only designed for research. Consistency and coherence in these 3 points helps...</p> <p>Consistency and coherence in these 3 points helps to reviewers in a peer review process. Hope this also can help you!.</p>
<p>Susana Miguel</p> <p>Portuguese Institute of</p>	<p>If it was the first time I reviewed a manuscript from that journal, I would start to read the author guidelines and review guidelines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, I read the entire manuscript to have the main view of the subject.

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<p>Oncology of Francisco Gentil, Portugal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carefully read each part of the manuscript and make some notes. • Analyze the methodology (depending on the kind of manuscript, check if it respects all the steps of the method). • Analyze the consistency of the manuscript. If the author answers the aim. If they identify the implications and contribute to the manuscript (the study) • Analyze the figures and graphics to see if they are well done. • Check the references, depending on the type of manuscript and the author's guidelines, and see if they are recent. • Writing the feedback to the authors, I start with positive topics (in a constructive way). Then politely, I ask the authors to explain the issues that are misunderstood. • Before submitting, I usually reread the manuscript and the document I write to the authors. Usually, I made this the day after doing this process.
<p>Dr Grigorios Kotronoulas</p> <p>University of Glasgow</p> <p>EONS RWG Co-Chair</p> <p>Editor-in-Chief Seminars in Oncology Nursing</p>	<p>What is it that motivates us to peer-review? Among others, confidence in skills and knowledge, good mentoring, practical support, and an urge to help promote our own field and learn from this in the process.</p> <p>Peer-review is a critical, quality-assurance exchange of knowledge. Peer-review of health care research requires skilful application of research literacy, critical thinking, and clinical wisdom. These are all qualities of modern-day professionals in health care; thus, eligibility for peer-review can be taken for granted.</p> <p>People new to peer-review worry a lot about their ability to critically appraise the research methods. However, peer-review isn't just about this, so it shouldn't be stopping you. Peer-reviewers with clinical experience and expertise in the area can provide unique insights to help authors discuss and analyse important aspects of their findings. This helps highlight the applicability of the findings to clinical practice. It is an often overlooked, yet powerful and much needed, aspect of peer-review.</p> <p>Crucially, peer-review is not an impossible task. We need more peer-reviewers to support this knowledge exchange. Equally, we need better supported peer-reviewers. And we need to keep investing in those new to peer-review and those contemplating signing up for it.</p> <p>If you're still asking, "can I do it?", the answer is, yes. With appropriate support, you can.</p>