

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PEER REVIEWERS

The critical review of manuscripts is an essential stage of publication. Every article that appears in *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada (JOGC)* undergoes peer review. Peer reviewers provide valuable help to the editor-in-chief and editorial board in maintaining high standards of publication. *JOGC* relies on its peer reviewers for unbiased, expert, and critical scientific and literary appraisals, delivered in a timely manner.

JOGC does not reveal the identity of reviewers to the author(s), and takes care to mask any identifying marks on reviews received by fax or e-mail to maintain the reviewers' anonymity.

The first responsibility of peer reviewers is to respond by the date indicated within the letter accompanying the manuscript. *If you are unable to review or return the manuscript by that date, please notify the editorial office as soon as possible so that the manuscript may be sent out to another reviewer without delay.*

A manuscript under review is a privileged communication. *JOGC* requires that reviewers destroy the manuscript upon completion and submission of the review, and that reviewers not communicate directly with authors of manuscripts they have reviewed, as any comments or questions may be misinterpreted when viewed in light of *JOGC*'s final decision. Ordinarily, no part of the manuscript under review should be revealed to anyone other than the reviewer. A reviewer must obtain through the editor the written permission of the author(s) to use or disclose any of the unpublished manuscript under review.

Occasionally, a reviewer may feel that his or her ability to make an objective evaluation is in question because of past or present relationships with the author(s), or because of personal bias regarding the author(s), the subjects, or the methods. *If you feel you may have a potential conflict of interest, please inform the editor-in-chief as soon as possible to discuss your situation with him.*

JOGC requires all reviewers to sign and return the conflict-of-interest statement accompanying the manuscript.

A two-part form accompanies each manuscript for review. The first part is for the editor-in-chief and includes a place to make either a recommendation to accept, to accept with minor revisions, to return for major revisions with an invitation to resubmit for peer review upon completion, or to reject as unsuitable for *JOGC*. There is also space to write comments.

The second part of the form is directed to the author(s), and is intended to convey to the author(s) the basis of the recommendation, without the recommendation itself. This portion of the review should provide, with as many specifics as possible, an indication of why a paper is unacceptable or what

is needed to make it acceptable. Reviewers may use additional pages as required. Criticisms of the manuscript, especially if the overall judgement is unfavourable, should be detailed and supported by appropriate references. If the manuscript you are reviewing bears substantial resemblance to a published paper or to a manuscript submitted at the same time to another journal, please report the resemblance to the editor-in-chief. *JOGC* accepts only original manuscripts.

As you prepare your report, you may find *JOGC*'s Instructions for Authors helpful, which indicate the format required for research reports, case reports, and review articles.

Here are ten points to consider as you evaluate the overall quality of the manuscript.

1. APPEAL/RELEVANCE

Is the paper interesting to read? Is the content important to *JOGC*'s readers?

2. ORIGINALITY/CURRENCY

Does the paper present new, innovative, or insightful information? Does it reflect current information on this topic?

3. CLARITY AND FOCUS

Is the purpose of the paper apparent or stated in the introductory section? Are any areas vague or difficult to understand? Are there any contradictions or inconsistencies? Are figures and tables useful and easy to interpret? Does the paper stay focused? Could focus be tightened? Is the paper too long?

4. ORGANIZATION

Are ideas developed and related in a logical sequence? Are transitions between discussions smooth and easy to follow? Is the content consistent with the purpose of the paper?

5. DEPTH/SCOPE OF COVERAGE

Does scope or depth of coverage in any area need to be expanded or condensed? Does any discussion need to be added or deleted? Do figures and tables complement rather than duplicate the text?

6. COMPOSITION

Is the paper well written? Are there grammar, spelling, or punctuation mistakes?

7. ACCURACY

In any information in the paper inaccurate? Are interpretations and conclusions sound? Has the author accurately character-

ized what referenced literature relates? Do math or text errors appear in figures or tables?

8. BALANCE

Have all sides of an issue been presented or at least acknowledged in the text and referenced? Are facts distinguished from assumptions and opinions? Is there undue bias toward particular practices or products?

9. ATTRIBUTION

Has information from the literature been appropriately and sufficiently acknowledged?

10. REFERENCES

Do the references represent authoritative sources of informa-

tion? Have the most current references on this topic been included? Are references formatted in *JOGC* style in both the text and the reference list?

In summary, reviewers may point out errors in fact or interpretation, call attention to inaccurate or ambiguous statements, advise condensing or enlarging sections, and suggest how to strengthen the presentation and clarify the writing style.

Courteous phrasing and specific examples (ideally presented using numbered comments, which help the author(s) during revision and the editorial staff when checking revisions) provide the most constructive help to authors seeking to improve their manuscripts.

Thank you so much for performing this valuable service for *JOGC*.