Reviewer Information

The American Journal of Preventive Medicine (AJPM) is the official journal of the American College of Preventive Medicine and the Association for Prevention Teaching and Research. Started in 1985, AJPM is a fully peer-reviewed international journal that publishes original research articles, reviews, current issues papers, commentary, and correspondence on all aspects of practice, education, policy, and research in preventive medicine and public health.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER REVIEW

Peer review refers to a formal system many scientific journals use whereby an academic submission is scrutinized and evaluated by individuals who are not involved in manuscript creation, but are considered knowledgeable in the subject area. Sending submissions to a small number of qualified peers who are experts in the relevant field helps editors decide what to publish.

Because peer review largely informs which manuscripts are selected for publication, it is a critical component in maintaining quality and integrity in the functioning of scientific communities.

In addition to discerning sound and ethical research, peer review also assists editors in identifying findings most likely to interest AJPM readership. Because the journal receives many more submissions than can be published, peer review helps distinguish which submissions are most pertinent to journal readership and most likely to affect clinical and public health practice.

REGISTER TO REVIEW FOR AJPM

AJPM welcomes your interest in reviewing submissions. You can register to review at: http://ees.elsevier.com/ajpm or contact our editorial office at ajpm@umich.edu.

Once registered, keep your profile current with appropriate and detailed classifications of your research expertise, so your name can be found in relation to particular subject areas. Your classifications should identify your expertise in a clear and detailed fashion, so please go through the choices carefully to make certain all relevant options are selected. However, please refrain from selecting areas of peripheral interest, as that may lead to inappropriate invitations to review.

AJPM utilizes a single-blind review, whereby authors are blinded to the reviewer’s identity. Therefore, please do not disclose any information in your review that may identify you or your institution.

Editors do rate reviewers on the quality of their feedback; in addition to helping the editorial office identify Top Reviewers (see section below), these ratings are also used as a guide when choosing from available reviewers.

Timeline for Reviewing

AJPM expects reviewers to complete feedback in a 2-week timeframe. If you have been invited to review, but cannot meet a 2-week deadline, please contact the editorial office (ajpm@umich.edu) and we will be happy to extend your due date if possible. The table below lists the various types of AJPM manuscript review.
Reviewer Information

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<th>Review type</th>
<th>Speed of decision</th>
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<td>In-house Editorial Office</td>
<td>Less than one week</td>
<td>Reason for rejection or confirmation that manuscript is being forwarded for peer review</td>
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<td>External peer review</td>
<td>Approximately 6 weeks (may be longer if undergoing Editorial Office statistical review)</td>
<td>Detailed review comments</td>
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Additional review
In cases where Editors request that authors revise and resubmit their manuscript, the revised submission is generally sent back to some or all original peer reviewers for re-review. Reviewers are asked to assess authors’ responses to previous recommendations as well as changes in the manuscript content that reflect these changes. Further rounds of re-review may be necessary if reviewers disagree or if the manuscript is highly technical.

BEING INVITED TO REVIEW

Your invitation to review will most likely come by email. In your invitation email, you will be provided with the title and authors of the manuscript, as well as a study abstract (if applicable). Before agreeing to review you should ask yourself:

Is the manuscript in my field of expertise?
Ideally the manuscript addresses a topic you are currently working in, meaning you will be up to date on current literature. You should be sure that you know enough about manuscript content to produce a quality review.

Do I have time to complete the review by the deadline?
AJPM requests reviewer feedback within two weeks. While the Editorial Office is happy to accommodate an extended schedule for you if possible, AJPM strives to provide authors with editorial decisions in a timely manner. Regardless of whether the Editorial Office extends your due date, you should only agree to review if you can deliver your feedback on time.

Do I have any conflicts of interest?
You may not undertake peer review for a manuscript if you have a conflict of interest (personal, financial, or professional) or any competing financial demands with the manuscript content you are invited to review.

Please note that having previously worked with authors on separate projects does not necessarily constitute a conflict of interest. It is a conflict, however, if you feel you will lack objectivity in your review.

If you accept the invitation to review and, while reading the full manuscript, you come to the conclusion that you do have a conflict of interest, you are required to withdraw from review. Should this happen, please inform the Editorial Office immediately and we will secure another reviewer.

Am I able to treat the manuscript as a confidential document?
While under review, the manuscript should not be discussed with others without express permission from the Editorial Office. If you are collaborating with a colleague or student on your review, please note that in your comments to the editors.

After you review the manuscript, you should not keep any copies.
DECLINING A REVIEW INVITATION

If you decide not to accept an invitation to review, please use the link in your invitation email to notify the journal immediately, so that editors can seek alternative reviewers.

If you can, suggest alternative reviewers. Finding and securing appropriate reviewers is one of the most challenging facets of editorial peer review, so our Editorial Office is grateful for your support in this way.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A QUALITY PEER REVIEW?

The aim of your review is both to help editors decide what to do with the manuscript, and to help authors improve it before publication. Please submit your review through our online system. You will need to complete the following in your report:

- Mention all conflicts of interest.
- Complete the tick boxes in the review form, and use the space for free text comments to editors and to authors.
- Number your comments – this helps authors when responding.
- Acknowledge help from others – if, after checking with the Editorial Office, you have shared the review task with colleagues or graduate student, please acknowledge their help in your review.
- Send in your review on time. If you need more time, please contact the Editorial Office at ajpm@umich.edu so that we're aware of the need for a deadline extension and can notify authors of any delay, as necessary.

In general, when you approach your review task, you should ‘do as you would be done by’. The best reviewers are separated from the rest by their ability to be objective, constructive, systematic and conscientious. These are the attributes to strive for.

Follow these general guidelines to achieve a quality review:

- Discuss article originality and contribution to current scholarship and science.
- Discuss the value of the topic to AJPM readership.
- Acknowledge strengths and weaknesses of study design, data collection, and data analysis.
- Discuss the author’s interpretation of results.
- Comment on manuscript writing, organization, statistical approaches, and tables and figures.
- Supply evidence and references (within text and in literature) to substantiate critical comments.
- Give a clear recommendation, with constructive comments in courteous tone.
- Complete original review and any re-reviews in timely fashion.
- Refrain from making personal comments, such as those related to the author’s affiliation, rank, or previous publication history.

Follow these specific guidelines to achieve a quality review:

- Abstract
  - Is abstract clear and complete?
  - Do you know what the study is about?
  - What are the main outcomes?
- Figures and Tables
  - Can they stand alone?
  - Do they contradict the abstract?
  - Is the data presented consistent with the prose in the results section?
  - Do the title and footnotes appropriate describe the information being presented?
  - Are they helpful?
- Introduction
  - Does the introduction set up the question that the study answers?
  - Does the introduction make the point that the study is worthwhile?
  - Are references complete and up to date? Check any important or surprising references; check statements that claim no literature exists.
  - Search literature for recent additions.
Reviewer Information

- **Methods**
  - Is there enough detail to permit replication?
  - Are the study design, methods, and measurements valid?
  - Is the section clear and complete?

- **Results**
  - Subjects: are baseline characteristics described and do they account for all subjects?
  - Results: do the results match the methods?
  - Statistics review: was the analysis appropriate? Can you understand and replicate the statistics?
  - Are there ways to eliminate redundancy between tables/figures/prose?

- **Discussion/conclusion**
  - Does the discussion place the results in context?
  - Are limitations thoughtful and complete?
  - Ensure that results information (i.e., data) isn’t repeated in this section
  - Check for new data – new data shouldn’t be presented in this section
  - Watch for information that should be in the introduction
  - Do the study findings support the conclusion?

- **References**
  - Are they up to date and complete?

- **Second abstract check**
  - Review initial notes – did the abstract describe the study?
  - Do results and conclusions actually match what was found?

- **Big Picture**:
  - Strengths and weaknesses
  - Quality of writing
  - Any unanswered questions?
  - Any 'fatal flaws'?

- **General**
  - Does title match content?
  - Is length appropriate (research manuscript vs brief report, etc.)

**Comments to Authors and Comments to Editors:**
In addition to your comments and recommendations for authors, AJPM provides you with the opportunity to communicate directly to editors; these comments are not typically provided to authors.

Please do not use Comments to the Editors to make substantive review points. Any general concerns that impact your overall recommendation should be clearly indicated in your author feedback, and the tone of your comments to editors should be consistent with that to authors (for example, please avoid writing constructive comments with mild criticism to authors, coupled with more detailed critique or a different recommendation to editors. If significant disparity exists between your comments to authors and to editors, editor comments may be disclosed to authors).

Some examples of appropriate comments to the editors:
- Explain your approach to the review and/or your own expertise in the area.
- Summarize your reasons for your rating & recommendations; advise editors more bluntly why this manuscript is a good or poor fit for AJPM.
- Consider the original aspects of the work and its importance.
- Disclose that you have seen earlier versions of the paper; communicate ethical concerns or other issues of this sort (including conflicts of interest and scientific misconduct).

**AJPM 'TOP REVIEWER’ AWARDS**

We all understand the critical role of peer review in increasing trust in scientific discoveries and recommendations, as well as how challenging it can be to find and retain quality reviewers. Recognizing and rewarding reviewers who respond when needed, provide objective, high-quality reviews, and/or have gone the extra mile for AJPM is a vital initiative of the Editorial Office.
By numerically scoring each review, and keeping qualitative descriptions of reviewers who go beyond what is generally required or expected, the Editor-in-Chief and Deputy Editor note reviewers who truly excel for AJPM.

At the end of each calendar year, using ranking scores as well as other factors, AJPM recognizes reviewers who have made outstanding contributions to the journal. These reviewers will have their name appear on the AJPM website and in the printed journal.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**How many reviewers are assigned to a manuscript?**
The number of reviewers often varies by manuscript type. Most papers receive feedback from three peer reviewers. Shorter papers, such as brief reports or current issues, may receive feedback from two peer reviewers. Some journal submissions such as commentaries and book reviews are reviewed by AJPM editors and do not undergo external peer review.

**I have been asked to review a supplement or theme article. Are there different review procedures for these article types?**
The same review guidelines apply to supplement and theme articles; however, it is important to note that these articles are often framed as reviews, policy overviews, or program summaries and may not be as data-driven as submissions to AJPM’s regular issue. We encourage reviewers to provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses of the paper, but recognize that article types other than research manuscripts are common in AJPM supplement and theme issues.

**How does AJPM handle disagreement among reviewers?**
It is common for reviewers to disagree both about specific points within an article as well as whether the work should be published. If editors cannot reach their own decision after assessing reviewer comments, the Editorial Office will send the manuscript to an additional reviewer(s) in order to resolve the matter.

**Will I get feedback on my review?**
When editors make a final decision on a manuscript, the decision and reviewer comments are sent in a letter to the corresponding author. The Editorial Office may also provide this letter to reviewers so that you know the final status of the paper and can see other reviewers’ feedback. This feedback allows reviewers to assess whether there were important problems with the manuscript that they might have missed, and gives you an opportunity to compare the tone and scope of your comments with those of your co-reviewers.

**Will I be asked to re-review the manuscript?**
Manuscript re-review is a critical component of peer review because you will see whether authors have adequately addressed your prior concerns. AJPM asks you to indicate in your initial review whether you are willing to review the manuscript again after it has been revised (but may send the manuscript to you again even if you have not specified you would like to re-review). The Editorial Office requires that authors provide a cover letter outlining the changes that they have made in response to reviewer comments to assist in the re-review process.