
How a Submitted Manuscript is Processed at PJIM

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With the thrust of the Philippine College of Physicians (PCP) leadership to improve research output by its accredited training hospitals, and also to come out with scholarly publications by the PJIM—the official journal of the college, we are featuring in this issue the editorial process followed by the PJIM to serve as a guide for prospective authors and other stakeholders. The PJIM is a quarterly peer-reviewed journal, and the official publication of the PCP.

Processing of a submitted manuscript to the journal can be an intricate and laborious process. There are three major players in the arena of publication, namely the author(s), the editor(s) and the peer reviewers. Everyone has an important role to play, with the editor mainly serving as the referee between the author and the reviewers, and the link between the author and the publication.

It is worthwhile for prospective authors to be aware of the editorial flow and what preliminary steps they can take to hasten the process even before submission of their manuscript. Every scientific journal has an “Instruction to Authors” section or page that details the form and style of that journal, which the author to conform with. This is in order to accelerate the process, and at the same time enhance the likelihood of acceptance. The PJIM uses two guides for this step: the Instructions to Authors, and the guidelines set by the ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors) on Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals, which are both found in the PCP website at the PJIM page (<http://pcp.org.ph/pjim/pjim>).

Once a paper has been submitted via on-line, together with the required accompanying letter, submission forms and disclosures, the manuscript is logged by the editorial office and assigned a corresponding identification number. Notice is given to the author that the paper has been received. The editorial office also reviews the paper for minimal requirement compliance, and if this is not met, the paper is returned to the author with notation.

On a monthly basis, a list of the submitted manuscripts together with the manuscripts are sent out to the editorial board for approval if the paper has sufficient merit to be sent out for peer review.

After the initial approval, the manuscripts are sent to the assigned senior and junior editors for the quarter for a closer look, and who assign at least two peer reviewers for each paper. The usual process we follow is double blinded review.

At the present set up of the PJIM, this next step—the peer review process is considered as the most challenging and time-consuming part. The challenge comes not only in looking for qualified reviewers, but also on their availability and willingness to take the responsibility. This problem is not exclusive to PJIM, but is considered by many journals as the bottleneck of the editorial process. Normally, a two to four week deadline is given to the reviewers, with two more weeks of allowance, but admittedly, this is often not complied with, thus, often the cause of delay in the editorial process.

When the reviewer returns the manuscript, either of three recommendations is given if the “paper is fit for publication?”: 1) No; 2) Yes, with major revisions; and 3) Yes, with minor revisions. The assigned editor collates the comments of the reviewers and send the paper back to the author for revision. If there are conflicting views by the reviewers, the editor may opt to reject, accept, or send to a third reviewer the said manuscript. For a more detailed discussion of the peer review process, you may check a previous editorial article on this. (www.pcp.org.ph/committee-on-pjim/409-phil-journal-of-internal-medicine-vol50-no3).

The author is given a period of time to revise, depending upon the degree of needed revisions. The usual practice of journals is to give about two weeks. For authors who does not send back the revision after six months, the said paper is considered withdrawn.

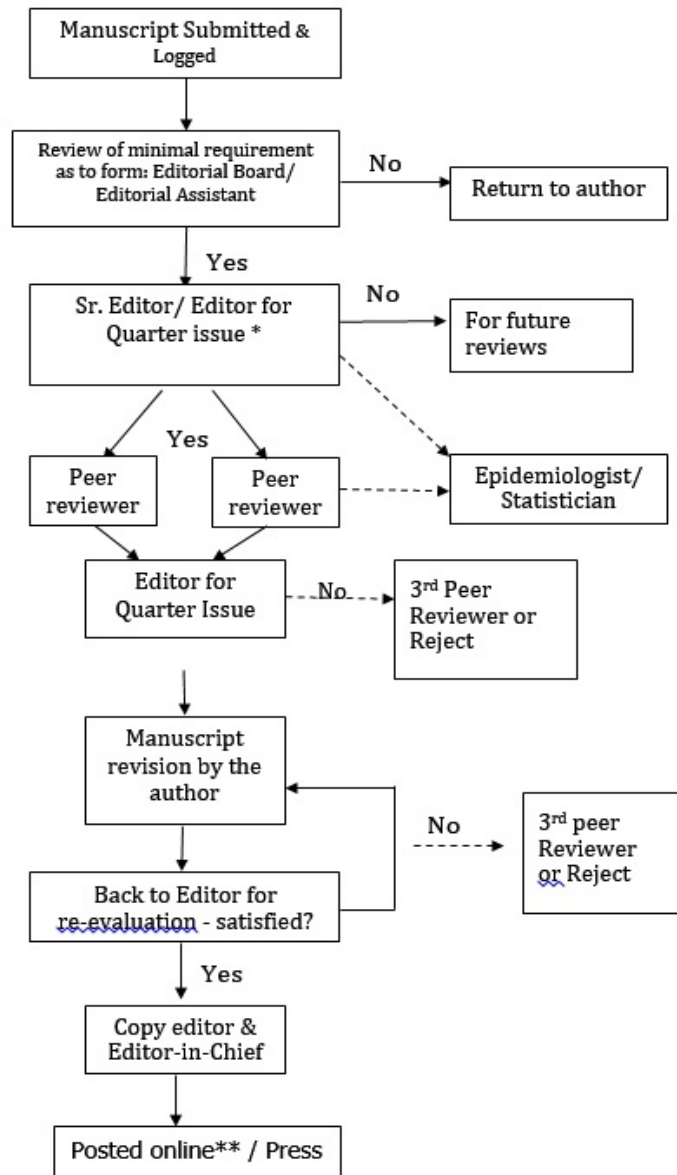
Once revision has been made, the editors check the paper for compliance of the author for the needed corrections. If approved, the paper is sent to the press for initial layout. If there is a need, the editor may send back the revised paper to the original reviewer, or send it to a third reviewer for a “fresh look,” or still be rejected.

After layout, the manuscript is sent to a copy editor for editorial corrections, adaptability to the house style of the journal, to improve readability, clarity and consistency of the manuscript flow. At the same time, the paper is also sent to the editor-in-chief (if another editor handled the issue) for final corrections. Revisions may have to be made more than two times before the final paper goes “off-the-press” or posted on-line.

Indeed, the manuscript selection and editorial process is complex and time-consuming. An overview of the entire process is shown in Figure 1. A knowledge of this editorial flow is important for potential authors, or those who have already submitted manuscripts. This is also helpful for the editorial board and peer reviewers as well. If all these major players of the scientific publishing arena will work with diligence and cooperation, then we can reach our common goal of coming up with scholarly publications.

Figure 1. PJIM Editorial Process

PJIM MANUSCRIPT SELECTION & PEER REVIEW PROCESS



*Will send authors acknowledgement of receipt

**www.pcp.org.ph/pjim/pjim