

**Conducting a Successful Peer Review for the Journal of the Dermatology Nurses'
Association**

Kiki Samko
March 2013

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO PEER REVIEW

What is peer review?

Peer review describes the system of subject matter experts examining scientific work prior to publication, and it is an important part of maintaining the integrity of the literature of the field. The primary goal of peer review is to ensure the validity and quality of work that will appear in scholarly journals. Peer reviewers are typically considered experts in their field and are valued partners of authors and editors alike.

Peer review is a cornerstone of the scientific community that serves to validate the rigor and standards of scholarly work that will be disseminated to the community at large via publication in scholarly journals. While the practice of reviewing can be challenging, it is essential to protect the integrity of the documentation of scientific research. It is essential for any scholarly journal wishing to be respected in the field to conduct the practice of peer review; furthermore, reviews must be of high quality to ensure the advancement of literature in the field.

The role of the reviewer

A reviewer's obligation is three-fold. First, reviewers must provide constructive feedback to authors to assist in developing their manuscript prior to publication. Second, they must provide guidance to editors in selecting manuscripts for publication. A reviewer recommends to the editor if a manuscript should be accepted, rejected outright, or rejected with an invitation to re-submit with revisions. All reviews are confidential; no one but the author and the editorial staff will read your comments. You are also expected to keep the content of the manuscripts you review classified. Finally, a reviewer has an obligation to the journal's readership and to the scientific community in general. The service reviewers provide ensures the scholarly content of an author's work that is disseminated to the scientific community is timely, relevant to advancing the field, and free from error or scientific misconduct.

A reviewer uses their expertise in their field to critically analyze a manuscript submitted for publication in order to determine its merit for publication, including clarity of the writing, the uniqueness of the content or method used for the study, the significance of the study and/or its results, and the scientific validity of the research presented. Thus, a reviewer is responsible for ascertaining the scientific integrity of the manuscript, along with its readability and suitability to the journal's readership. A reviewer, then, is an invaluable piece of shaping the body of work in the field and the record of science.

While the above description seems fairly straightforward, the role of a reviewer is actually quite complex for it is fraught with significance. The work of peer review essentially verifies the scientific rigor and validity of the manuscript and, therefore, of the journal itself and, above all, the literature that shapes the current practice and historical record of the field.

Types of Peer Review

There are several types of peer review. *Informal reviews* occur prior to submission and do not offer feedback to a journal's editor, only to the author. Typically, the author will ask this of a known peer. *Open reviews* are those in which the author and the reviewer each know the other's identity. *Single blind reviews* occur when the reviewer knows the author's identity but the author does not know who the reviewer is. The majority of scholarly journals, including *JDNA*, use the process of *double-blind review*, meaning neither the author nor the reviewer knows the other's identity. This allows for a more objective critique of the work. If you think you can identify a manuscript's author by the information

contained in the text, you should alert the editor of this immediately to avoid any potential conflicts of interest or accusations of misconduct.

Reasons to be a peer reviewer

Being asked to conduct a peer review means that your peers view you as an expert in your profession, so acting as a reviewer is a distinction. The real joy of reviewing, however, may come in the knowledge that you are helping to promote the integrity of literature in your field, providing an historical record as well as shaping the way your profession is practiced. The process of peer review contributes to improvements in patient care and the healthcare system, as well encouraging the dissemination of new and exciting ideas and information in your field. Volunteering to serve as a peer reviewer demonstrates a commitment to your profession and a desire to help it develop.

Anyone who has published work that has been peer reviewed has a professional duty to serve as a peer reviewer. Moreover, participating in the process as a reviewer presents an opportunity to hone your writing and research skills, while simultaneously increasing your knowledge base. It is also a chance for you to contribute to the knowledge base of your profession in a real, significant way.

Who can be a peer reviewer?

As mentioned above, a peer reviewer is an unbiased expert in their professional field and must be knowledgeable about a manuscript's content and possess a clear understanding of the historical context in which the text is based. Using an independent expert, who is not affiliated professionally with the journal, decreases bias in selecting articles for publication. However, when serving as a reviewer, you *are* representing that journal and so, to maintain the journal's reputation in its field, you must do your best to ensure that only pertinent work of the highest quality and integrity will be published.

There are certain key qualities which a reviewer must possess or develop over time in order to be successful. First, objectivity in your assessment of manuscripts is essential in ensuring only manuscripts of unimpeachable quality are published. This means that if you have a personal, professional, or financial interest in the topic presented in a manuscript you must report this to the editor, who will judge whether or not you will be able to remain unbiased; if you do indeed review the manuscript, then it is of utmost importance that you remove yourself from your personal interest as much as possible. Therefore, you must be aware of your own biases and possess a well-developed sense of self.

Excellent language skills and a keen eye for detail are also necessary, as reviewers assess not just the scientific content but also the structure, flow, and prose of the manuscript. Furthermore, a reviewer must be familiar with the journal and its readership, as it is part of a reviewer's job to assess what will interest the readers. Discretion is also critical; reviewers are expected to keep the content of the manuscript entirely confidential, not sharing it with anyone and destroying the work appropriately when the review is complete. If revision to the work is necessary, the reviewer should save the manuscript until the revision and resubmission are complete, and then destroy it appropriately and confidentially.

A basic knowledge of statistics and general research concepts are necessary, too, as a major task of the reviewer is to verify the validity of the reported studies. However, you do not need to be an expert statistician to conduct a review; typically, the journal will ask more than one person to review each submission, one of whom may be specifically focusing on the statistics presented.

A reviewer can only improve with practice and feedback on their reviews. Ask the editor to provide this feedback so you can continue to enhance your skill set; this is particularly important if you are a novice reviewer.

The peer review process

The peer review process may seem daunting to those who have not participated in it. However, the process is critical in maintaining integrity in scientific literature. A streamlined peer review process also enhances a journal's prestige.

The guidelines that follow are meant to serve as a helpful tool for *JDNA* reviewers to use and refer back to during the review process. Operating appropriately within these guidelines will ensure a valuable feedback process, resulting in a trustworthy journal. The guidelines recommend how to begin your process and suggest areas to focus on during the review. *JDNA* has also provided a rating scale for their reviewers to accompany these guidelines and to assist in conducting a thorough, fair review. The questions should be used as a guide, but do not feel constrained by them. If you feel that your review needs to touch upon other topics or go beyond the scope of the questions asked, you are encouraged to expand your review when submitting it to the editor. Remember that, in your review, objectivity is crucial; focusing on these guidelines will help you achieve that.

SECTION 2: HOW TO CONDUCT A GENERAL PEER REVIEW

There is no single way to conduct a peer review, but we recommend following these guidelines to ensure a thorough, quality assessment. A high quality review will offer insightful feedback for the author on how s/he might develop the manuscript further. It will also recommend to an editor the expert opinion of the reviewer on whether or not to publish the article. An excellent review will support its recommendation using evidence from the review to demonstrate to the editor why they support either publication or rejection. A review can also suggest that an author revise the work and resubmit for consideration, provided the author agrees to revisions. In some cases, the manuscript may be of high quality, but the content may not be suitable for *JDNA*. In that case, it is acceptable for a reviewer to recommend that the author submit the manuscript for consideration in another journal.

The guidelines below are intended to assist you in completing the best review possible. It is our hope that you will reflect on these guidelines as you conduct each review. They accompany a rating scale, which you will be asked to complete for each manuscript you review. These guidelines should assist you in answering each question on the scale in an informed manner, resulting in a successful review. Remember, each review you conduct has the potential to improve and develop the work you are reviewing, thereby enhancing the literature of the field in which you are an expert. The more thorough and thoughtful your review, the more prestigious and reputable the literature will become.

Recall also that, when conducting a review, it is very important to maintain utmost confidentiality. To protect the integrity of the work and the journal, do not mention the content of the manuscript to anyone. When you have completed your review, you will need to properly dispose of the manuscript in a confidential way. Confidentiality should be at the forefront of your mind at all times during the process described below.

Please follow these steps in order to make your peer review the best it can be.

STEP 1: READ FOR GENERAL CONTENT

The manuscript you are being asked to review will be sent to you, along with an invitation to review, through Editorial Manager, an online submission site (www.editorialmanager.com/jdna). Begin by reading the manuscript as soon as possible after you receive the request to review. Delineate a specific, uninterrupted block of time in which to complete this primary read-through. This will give you a sense of the topic, general style, and flow of the article. This preliminary reading should give you a sense of the answers to the questions on the rating scale (see Appendix 1).

Once you have read the manuscript for a holistic view, consider the timeliness of the topic, the appropriateness of the manuscript for the journal's target audience, and consistency with the journal's mission and other content. Then, consider the timeline set for you in your invitation to review. Punctuality is important, and *JDNA* typically gives authors a publication decision within six weeks of submission. If you have doubts about your ability to conduct the review within the specified timeframe, then you should decline the review. Please note that timeframes will vary and often the editor will need a review returned very quickly; if you do accept the review, it is critical to keep the timeline delineated at the forefront of your mind. If you find that you will not be able to complete the review on time, contact the editor.

If the editor has not specifically informed you of the reason they sought you as a reviewer for this particular piece, consider the question. Are you a content expert, a research methodology expert, or a practice expert? If you cannot ascertain why you were selected, ask the editor. If you are concerned with your level of expertise, you should also alert the editor, for it would not benefit anyone for you to conduct a review as an expert on a topic with which you are not acutely familiar. If you feel comfortable with the content of the manuscript in general but need a refresher on specifics, that is not cause for concern. Simply refresh your memory by doing some background research and reading (see Step 2 below).

You should also let the editor know if you think you know the identity of the author of the manuscript based on the work. Peer reviews at *JDNA* are expected to be double-blind and the author's identity should be unknown to the reviewer so that it does not influence the review in any way.

After considering the above criteria, accept or decline the request to review through Editorial Manager. If you need a tutorial on using the online Editorial Manager tool, you can find helpful tips at www.editorialmanager.com.

STEP 2: CONDUCT A LITERATURE SEARCH ON THE TOPIC

Even if you are very familiar with the topic of the manuscript you agree to review, conducting a search of existing literature will be helpful as you move through your review (see Step 4, Area 3 below on citation of materials). Reading or skimming the literature will help you refresh your memory on the topic as well as the content of relevant sources that you should expect to see cited by the author as you examine the manuscript further.

STEP 3: REVIEW THE QUESTIONS ON THE RATING SCALE

Keep these questions in mind as you proceed with the following step. They will help you focus your review, pinpointing areas that need the most work. Make notes on these areas as you move along, and feel free to answer each question section by section as you proceed with your review. Another tactic would be to make notes pertaining to the scale as you read through the article again and to complete

the rating scale after you have finished your thorough second read-through of the manuscript (see Step 4 below).

STEP 4: *READ FOR SPECIFICS*

It is advisable to take a substantial break (a day or two, perhaps) between reading the submitted manuscript for content before returning to the text for the next phase of review: determining which areas to focus your review. You should also have reviewed the existing literature prior to beginning this step.

Many scientific articles presenting original research are structured in a way that mirrors the scientific process: *Introduction, Materials/Methods/Data, Results, and Discussion*. After the Discussion section, there is usually a *Conclusion* section, which is a brief synthesis of the original problem statement, the findings, and the discussion. When reviewing an article of this type, you should evaluate each section of the manuscript on its own, in order, considering the key issues for each section mapped out below.

There are also many other types of articles that you may be asked to review for *JDNA*, such as reviews of existing research, case studies, clinical studies, or question and answer sections. These all still require peer review. For all types of manuscripts you review, there are general overall issues that you should consider as you conduct your review, including: style and grammar, clarity and comprehension, flow and logical progression of content, appropriate use and style of tables and figures, appropriate citation of materials, synthesis of sources, usefulness to readers and fit with our journal, journal and reference format, and ethical concerns (including plagiarism, conflicts of interest, and the ethical treatment of human and animal subjects). Tips on these general areas follow the discussion of key issues to watch for in each section of a manuscript concerned with original research.

Regardless of what type of manuscript you are reviewing, it should have a practical and original title and the body of the manuscript should be preceded by a 100-200 word abstract summarizing the content section by section (or simply overall if not segmented as noted above). The abstract must be its own entity and not simply a restatement of the first paragraph of the introduction. Typically, manuscripts are followed by a list of references, in American Psychological Association (APA) format (7th edition). Sometimes, the author will include an acknowledgement section as well.

Title

Since you have already read the manuscript for content once over, you should feel qualified to make an assessment of the manuscript's title. Since title will determine what pops up in searches for material (via search engines and scholarly databases, etc.), it is critical that the title reflect the content of the manuscript. It should accurately depict the study's aims and topic without revealing too much about the results. Furthermore, a title should grab a reader's attention and therefore must be interesting and clear, piquing interest in the work. A misleading and unoriginal title will decrease the reach of the manuscript and, therefore, its significance in the field.

Abstract

The purpose of an abstract is to succinctly and clearly summarize the manuscript including the study and its aims, materials, methods, findings, and conclusions. This is a very brief synopsis—only 100-200 words. In many cases, this may be the only part of the manuscript readers will see due to time constraints or viewing restrictions (for those who search online and do not have full access to the journal), so it should give an accurate yet concise summary of the content contained in the manuscript.

Once again, your preliminary reading of the manuscript for content should empower you to make an informed assessment about the abstract. Pay attention also to whether or not the abstract follows APA format. Also, be sure that the abstract is not simply a restatement of the introduction. It should be its own separate and distinct piece of work.

Introduction

This section of the manuscript presents the topic of the manuscript to readers and should clearly state within the first two paragraphs the aims of the study and the main question or problem the investigation addresses. It should also include background information; historical context of the problem statement; and the prevalence, extent and significance of the problem, particularly in relation to the journal's readership. In order to place the problem within the historical context of the field, the Introduction should include a synthesis of existing current published literature on the topic. Furthermore, the author should relate their study to existing work, situating its importance and identifying the gap which their work aims to fill. If there are controversies within the published data, the author should cite sources on both sides of the issue and should note where research is lacking. Your search of literature will come in handy here, as it will help you identify whether any major important pieces of work have been excluded and if all citations are valid and accurate. See the sections below for a fuller discussion of appropriate citation of existing literature and synthesis of sources. Please note that the introduction is not the appropriate section to mention study findings or design.

Materials/Methods/Data

This section's primary aim is to outline, in detail, how the study was designed and executed; thus, it should give sufficient detail so that a reader could replicate the study. A description of all planned activities prior to data collection should appear here, as well as how variables were selected and measured and the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of study participants. The statistical methods used to analyze data should be explained here, too. The author should then describe any pilot or trials of the study and any changes made to preliminary design based on those trials. Finally, all measures put in place to ensure the ethical treatment of human and animal participants should be included here (see the Ethical Considerations section below for a deeper look at the ethical treatment of participants). All factors of the data measurement, study design, and analysis must be appropriate to address the study's purpose and answer its problem statement.

Results

This section neutrally reports the study's findings, with no discussion of their implications. Often, figures and/or tables will be used to show numerical results. If this is the case, the information contained in the figures/tables should not be repeated in the narrative, except to describe or show an example of how to read the visual representation of the data. The visuals should give the reader a sense of any trends or relationships that the study uncovered. The visual data should be used to highlight the study's findings, but should not interrupt the flow of the text in a jarring way. All tables and figures should be visually understandable and appealing and of reproducible quality. The author must obtain appropriate permissions to reproduce any tables and figures that appear in the manuscript. The results of the study should be logical, moving from the general to the specific, and should match the plan described for reporting the data in the Materials/Methods/Data section.

Discussion

This is the appropriate section for interpreting the results of the study and demonstrating their implications in and significance to general practice and the historical context of the topic. Here, the author should summarize their findings, highlighting unique aspects of the research and stating conclusions drawn from the findings. All conclusions must be scientifically supported by the research data reported in the Results section. Moreover, the author should relate his/her interpretation of the findings back to the manuscript's original study question or problem and to the existing base of knowledge on the topic, comparing and contrasting methodology and results. Reference to the literature cited in the introduction is appropriate here, but no new works should be introduced at this time.

No study can be perfect, and so the author should include a description of the weaknesses of the study and any limitations it had and how they may or may not have affected the findings. Finally, any application or changes to practice, programs, or policy based on the findings should be clearly noted, as well as gaps in knowledge that still remain and possible directions for future research on the topic. These directions should be noted as conjecture only, not fact.

Conclusion

The conclusion is the final section of the manuscript and should integrate the research question, results, and discussion of implication. This section is typically very short and brings the writing to a logical and direct close. Consider, based on the manuscript, whether you think the data reported in the manuscript support the author's conclusion.

Acknowledgement

This section is not always included, but if it is, it should be reviewed to ensure it is suitable for publication.

References

These will be discussed in further detail below, but be aware that it is the duty of the reviewer to check the reference list to be sure the author has conducted a thorough examination of the existing literature and that no crucial current sources have been neglected. Finally, the reviewer should check to be sure the reference list follows APA format and that any web links are live and link to the content they should.

Looking at the article section by section should be helpful to a reviewer, making the content more easily digestible. The areas below apply to the manuscript as a whole and/or to each section individually.

Furthermore, as noted above, you will often review a manuscript that is not original research, and is not presented in the format outlined above. In such cases, these areas of concern are how you should focus and organize your review. Most importantly for these types of manuscripts, are to note that each contains a statement of the piece's significance (both within the historical and upcoming contexts), a statement of why the piece is important for nurses and patients, and a logical conclusion. The implications for dermatology nursing practice of all manuscripts should be clear and significant.

General Areas of Concern

Area 1: Flow of text and logical progression of content

Make sure that a research manuscript follows the structure above, moving logically from an introduction to a description of the materials and methods, to a report of the results, to a discussion of their significance, and ending in a final conclusion. If you are reviewing a non-research manuscript, be sure that the text moves logically, making clear connections and linkages from one thought or point to the next.

Note if there are any sections or sub-sections that need to be re-arranged to enhance a reader's comprehension of the manuscript. The text should flow smoothly, using transitions to make relationships between information clear. Tables and figures should not disrupt the flow of the text. Headings and sub-headings should be used as necessary to guide the reader visually through the manuscript.

The manuscript should also adhere to *JDNA's* submission formatting (see <http://journals.lww.com/jdnaonline/Pages/informationforauthors.aspx> for details on this). *JDNA* follows APA (7th edition) guidelines in their formatting requirements.

Area 2: Clear writing and comprehension

While the main point of your review is not to assess the author's writing skills, clear and concise prose is important to readers' understanding of the manuscript's purpose. The text should flow logically, using transitions and links to guide the reader from beginning to end seamlessly. The purpose must be evident and supported by well-developed and logical arguments throughout.

The manuscript's content should be balanced between basic and advanced information. An author may make assumptions about their readers' base knowledge that are untrue, so it is important for you to try to read the manuscript as if you were not a content expert and try to determine areas with which the average reader may not be familiar and which, therefore, would require further explanation for a reader to understand the manuscript as a whole. Ask yourself if the author has given you all the information necessary to understand each section of the manuscript. The author should present all information needed for an average reader to understand the text's purpose, arguments, and conclusion. Note particularly any jargon or acronyms that may be confusing to readers.

It is inappropriate for a reviewer to rewrite the work in a style that they prefer, but the reviewer should look for mistakes in grammar and spelling and for awkward phrasing that hinders a reader's understanding of the text.

Area 3: Appropriate citation of materials

Any good scientific manuscript will contain a discussion of the extant literature on the topic. As an expert, one part of your task is to ascertain that the author has not excluded any recent and relevant pieces of work. Your preliminary literature search will assist you with this as well. This is particularly important for research articles and, in some cases, case studies.

The focus of the literature review should be on primary sources and current research (done in the last five to ten years in the case of clinical articles), and should place the study in the historical context of the topic while also delineating both sides of any existing controversies related to the topic. Any previously

published ideas or research must be appropriately cited, using the format of the APA (7th edition). See www.apastyle.org/ for a style guide.

Every citation in the manuscript should have a corresponding reference in the reference list that accompanies the text. A reviewer should spot check that list to make sure that any web links are active and lead to the correct material and that all works cited are appropriate for the manuscript (for example, commercial websites are typically not appropriate sources for a scholarly work). They should also spot check for misspellings, non-matching dates and names, and any incomplete references.

Common errors to watch for as you review citations include: the author citing or quoting each statement they write; making obscure or controversial remarks with no substantiating reference attached to it; and incorrect formatting of citations. Another key area to check is the validity of the citations—that is to say, a reviewer should make sure that the reference cited says what the author claims it does and that the information was not taken out of context. Frequent self-citing is another area of concern as it could lead to exclusion of others' important data and could indicate, in some cases, self-plagiarism (see the section below on Ethical Concerns).

Area 4: Synthesis of sources

A manuscript shouldn't simply summarize the existing literature, but should integrate it along with the author's own work, discussing how the published ideas and discoveries relate to the problem statement and the study's findings and arguments in order to help a reader make their own conclusions about the manuscript's relevance and its place in the historical context of the topic. The cited existing literature should serve as a framework for the author's discussion of his/her research, in other words.

Area 5: Usefulness to readers and fit with journal

This is one of the most important overarching questions to consider in your review. The manuscript must be interesting and useful to readers of *JDNA*, so it must be relevant; timely; original in its problem statement, methods, and/or findings; and should have clear implications to the practice of dermatology nurses. You should also consider whether the tone and style of the manuscript fit with other articles that have appeared in *JDNA*. Length is another consideration that falls into this area of concern: is the article too long or too short compared to other articles that have appeared in the journal? Each edition of the journal should read as a cohesive whole, so the article must fit in if it is to be published in the journal.

Area 6: Ethical concerns

The main areas of ethical concern are plagiarism, conflicts of interest, and the treatment of human and animal study participants.

Plagiarism

One of the most important and unpleasant duties of the reviewer is to note any omission of credit to sources used. If you spot this, you should search for original location of the source material and follow up with an appropriate comment to the editor noting the missed citation to its source. A key indicator of unintentional plagiarism is a great variance in the prose style. If you detect this, you may wish to suggest that the editor submit the manuscript to an online plagiarism detection site. See icmje.org/#over for more information.

Needless to say, using previously published ideas and discoveries without giving proper credit to the original source is a very serious breach of integrity that we wish to avoid at all costs.

Conflicts of Interest

Each manuscript should have a conflict of interest disclosure contained therein, stating any possible conflicts that the author may have that might compromise the results of the study. These could include the institution employing the author, organizations that have funded the author in the past or present, etc. If there are no conflicts of interest, the author should state this as well. Based on this statement, you should recommend if you think any sponsorship or conflict has affected the outcome of the work.

Furthermore, you are ethically obligated to notify the editor of your own conflicts of interest. These may include: the author's identity (if you can figure it out from the text); a strongly held conviction that compromises your objective appraisal of the manuscript; or your own sponsorship, funding, or affiliations that may affect your desire to see the manuscript published or not. You should report all of these to the editor in your review if not before, as in some cases these conflicts may be grounds to ask you not to complete the review.

Protection of Human Participants

The research presented must conform to the ethical standards for the treatment of human (and animal) study participants as determined by the International Review Board (IRB). There should be a statement in each manuscript you review informing readers that these standards were adhered to when humans and animals were involved in the research. If there is anything in the Materials/Methods or any other section that leads you to believe these standards were not adhered to during the author's research, you should report this to the editor.

STEP 5: COMPLETE THE RATING SCALE

If you have not been rating the manuscript on the scale section by section as you proceed through your thorough reading, take a few moments to reflect on the overall manuscript and complete the scale in order to assist you with your narrative review. The scale asks questions, which you should rate on a scale of one (1) to five (5), where one means "not at all" and five means "completely." Any question that does not rank at a four (4) or above is cause for concern and you should note it as an area for revision in your written review. See Appendix 1 for the scale.

SECTION THREE: HOW TO WRITE AND STRUCTURE YOUR REVIEW

The narrative section of your review is of utmost importance. It is what the author will use to improve his or her manuscript and what the editor will use to assist in making his or her publication decision. Therefore, it is critical that you are clear and thoughtful in review, demonstrating a sound understanding of the content and making salient points supported by evidence in the text or the field of work. Reviews do not need to be verbose or lengthy—in fact, they should be succinct—but they must include enough detail to support your publication recommendation and for an author to understand what changes you suggest and why.

Use the areas above to focus your review, noting if the key issues mentioned earlier are addressed well or if you have concerns about them. Note the strengths with general comments, but provide specific insight on how to improve weaknesses. This will make for a helpful review, rather than a destructive one. The best reviews point out the strengths of a manuscript while assiduously identifying the areas of improvement and ways in which the author can address them in order to develop the work. Your suggestions for improvement should be detailed enough that the author may easily implement them but not so detailed as to constitute rewriting the manuscript. Above all, you must not be disparaging in tone.

The point of the review is not to criticize the author or the work, but to develop the existing work so that it may contribute to the literature of the field.

Below, you will find advice on how to structure your review, what content to include, what tone to strike with your writing, and how to make your publication recommendation.

Structure

Reviews should be separated into Comments for the Author and Comments for the Editor. All comments should move from general to specific and should follow the structure of the author's article for ease of understanding.

Comments for the Author should follow this basic flow. Begin by briefly summarizing the content and point of the manuscript as you understand it. This demonstrates to the author and editor that you grasp the work's purpose. Follow that with general comments on the overall strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript as a whole, including the key areas noted above: flow, clarity, appropriate citations, synthesis of sources, usefulness to readers, and ethical concerns. If you are reviewing a research manuscript, move on to specific comments about each of the key area, if necessary. Moving through each section in the order noted above—*Title, Abstract, Introduction, Materials/Methods/Data, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, and References*—make specific suggestions for development, noting the page, paragraph, or line number for clarity. Number your suggestions so that the author may respond to each. You should include comments about the key areas of concern noted above where appropriate in each section. If you are reviewing a non-research manuscript, make specific comments about areas of concern (as noted above) in the manuscript, being sure to point to page, paragraph, and line numbers, creating a numbered list of issues for the author to address. Finally, conclude with thanks to the author and positive reinforcement.

Your Comments for the Editor should mirror your Comments for the Author, but you should end with your recommendation for publication rather than with thanks and positive reinforcement. The author should never see your recommendation for publication.

Content

Good reviews demonstrate an understanding of the content presented, give constructive guidance on development of the manuscript, are collegial and impartial, and adequately and rationally support the recommendation for publication.

A good review will assess a manuscript's clarity, flow, syntax, and grammar, but will also focus on the logic and scientific rigor of the work and the originality of the problem statement, methods, results, and work presented. It is also critical for a review to evaluate the relevance of the work to the journal's readership and the significance of the work to the field overall.

Use the rating scale provided to guide your review, answering the questions honestly based on your thorough review of the manuscript. Any item that rates less than a 4 on the scale warrants a specific comment and suggestion for improvement. It is appropriate for a review to suggest changes to the body's manuscript and structure. It should also address the work's relevance and comment on the significance of the work, giving the opinion of an expert in the field.

Common weaknesses of reviews include vague suggestions and a focus on copyediting rather than scientific relevance and merit, so be sure to be specific in your comments and focus your review on the

work's scientific validity and significance. It is also important to strike the right tone; don't be too easy or too tough on the author (see below for suggestions on how to present your feedback).

Tone

Your review must be balanced and fair, offering positive comments about the strengths of the work in addition to suggestions for improvement. Your personal views on the topic or the conclusions reached should not interfere with your review, unless you are noting a scientific flaw in the conclusions based on existing empirical evidence. Your review should be precise and succinct, but detailed enough to be useful to the author and the editor. If you dispute a point the author has made, be sure to substantiate your comment with evidence.

A reviewer's job is to provide appropriate, constructive feedback that is free from bias. Your tone should be honest but compassionate, recognizing the passion and dedication of the author. Many nurse authors are not experienced writers, but their contributions to the field of nursing literature are invaluable; without authors we would have no historical record of nursing practices. Thus, a reviewer should encourage authors to develop their manuscripts and improve their writing by offering a collaborative and collegial critique as opposed to harsh and judgmental criticism.

Publication Decision

There are three options for publication which you may recommend to the editor: to publish the manuscript as is or with very few revisions; to reject the manuscript outright; or to reject the manuscript with an invitation to resubmit it pending significant revision. A decision can be reached by considering the relative strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript as well as evaluating its relevance to the journal and its readers.

Before you make your recommendation on publication to the editor, consider the manuscript thoughtfully, reflecting on its strengths and weaknesses and its significance to the field overall and the readership of the journal specifically. Consider its originality and relevance. Note if there are any "fatal flaws" in the manuscript, such as a failure to relate the study's findings to the existing literature, not stating the findings clearly, discussing the findings inappropriately, or data and conclusions that lack originality and do not contribute to advancing the knowledge or practice of the field.

Remember, it is your job to protect readers from flawed research. Acceptance should be limited to those manuscripts that are well-written and provide a clear contribution to the knowledge base of the field that can be easily applied in practice.

There are other reasons for rejection outside of these "fatal flaws." For example a poor quality manuscript that is illogical in flow and incomprehensible in tone should be rejected. Any manuscript with inadequate content or unoriginal ideas likely does not merit publication. Questionable research methods or quality of the findings are also good reasons to reject a submission. Ethical reasons for rejection include conflicts of interest, unethical treatment of human/animal subjects, and plagiarism. Finally, if the manuscript is not the right fit for the journal or if the article is not timely or relevant to warrant publication, you may decide to recommend rejection. If the manuscript is of high quality and integrity but is simply not right for the journal's readership, you may wish to identify a journal where publication may be more appropriate.

Whatever your recommendation, be clear and respectful in your comments and support your decision with evidence from the manuscript and the existing theoretical framework for the topic (if applicable).

Submitting Your Review

Review submission is done via *Editorial Manager*. Please visit <https://www.editorialmanager.com/jdna/default1.aspx> for instructions on using the website to submit a review. You must log-in as a reviewer here: <http://www.editorialmanager.com/jdna/> in order to submit your review.

Be sure to complete the review in a timely manner, as a delayed review results in delayed publication of potentially critical data that could change the field.

Ask for feedback about your reviews from the editor. This will help you improve your reviewing skills.

SECTION 4: RESOURCES FOR REVIEWERS

We hope that the above guidelines will assist you in the challenging task of peer review. It is our hope that you will return to them again and again when conducting peer reviews. To further your edification, below is a list of reference you may find useful. Best of luck with your reviews!

A good resource for teaching and/or self-learning, this site posts selected manuscripts, reviews, and author correspondence for the public to see.

www.icmje.org/#over

A website from the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors with information on duplicate publication and related copyright laws.

www.apastyle.org/

The official website of the American Psychological Association, where reviewers can find FAQs, guidelines, and a complete style guide to assist in their reviews. *JDNA* follows APA style guidelines.

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query/static/citmatch.html

An online author survey and review rating tool used in a study by SHATTEL, CHINN, THOMAS & COWLING (2010) that may assist you in rating the quality of your own review before submission.

www.nurseauthoreditor.com

This website has many resources available for nurse authors, editors, and reviewers, including a listing of all nursing journals, newsletters with writing and publishing guidelines, and more.

Christenbery, T. L. (2010). Manuscript peer review: a guide for advanced practice nurses. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 23, 15-22. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-7599.2010.00572.x

A very helpful article on peer review, specifically targeting nurse authors and reviewers.

REFERENCES

Alexander, G. R. (2005). A guide to reviewing manuscripts. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 9(1), 113-117. doi: 10.1007/s10995-005-2423-y

- Benos, D. J., Kirk, K. L., & Hall, J. E. (2003). How to review a paper. *Advan in Physiol Edu*, 27(2), 47-52. doi: 10.1152/advan.00057.2002
- Christenbery, T. L. (2010). Manuscript peer review: a guide for advanced practice nurses. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, 23, 15-22. doi: 10.1111/j.1745-7599.2010.00572.x
- Garmel, G. M. (2010). Reviewing manuscripts for biomedical journals. *The Permanente Journal*, 14(1), 32-40. Retrieved from <https://www.thepermanentejournal.org/>
- Griffin-Sobel, J. P. (2004). Tips for reviewing manuscripts. *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 8(6), 653. doi: 10.1188/04.CJON.653
- Harding, A. D. (2010). How to phrase feedback in peer reviews for nurse authors? *Advanced Emergency Nursing Journal*, 32(4), 333-337. Retrieved from www.ovid.com/site/catalog/Journal/3331.jsp
- Henly, S.J., & Dougherty, M.C. (2009). Quality of manuscript reviews in nursing research. *Nurs Outlook*, 57(1), 18-26. doi: 10.1016/j.outlook.2008.05.006
- Hoyt, K. S., & Proehl, J. A. (2007). Peer review for professional publications. *Advanced Emergency Nursing Journal*, 29(3), 260-264. Retrieved from journals.lww.com/aenjournal/pages/default.aspx
- Oman, K. (2009). Peer review: the art of supporting colleagues and advancing our profession. *Journal of Emergency Nursing*, 35, 278. doi: 10.1016/j.jen.2009.05.011
- Pierson, C.A. (2007). Reviewing journal manuscripts. Wilkey-Blackwell Publishing.
- Shattell, M. M., Chinn, P., Thomas, S. P., & Cowling, III, W. R. (2010). Authors' and editors' perspectives on peer review quality in three scholarly nursing journals. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 42(1), 58-65. doi: 10.1111/j.1547-5069.2009.01331.x
- van Rooyen, S., Black, N., & Godlee, F. (1999). Development of the Review Quality Instrument (RQI) for assessing peer reviews of manuscripts. *J Clin Epidemiol*, 52(7), 625-629. Retrieved from www.jclinepi.com/

Appendix 1

RATING SCALE FOR JOURNAL OF THE DERMATOLOGY NURSES' ASSOCIATION (JDNA) PEER REVIEWERS

Please answer each of the following questions regarding the manuscript you are reviewing, using the scale below where **1** means **not at all** and **5** means **completely**. In the case where the answer is below 4, please make suggestions in your narrative of how to bring the score up to par. This scale should be used in tandem with the "Guidelines for Peer Reviewers at JDNA", which provides detailed information on how to complete an excellent review and how and why these questions are relevant. Once you have completed this survey, please submit a narrative with your recommendations for revision and your ultimate recommendation to the editor to accept, reject, or invite for resubmission with revision, using Editorial Manager. Please see the "Guidelines for Peer Reviewers at JDNA" for suggestions on how to write a solid peer review, including structure, content, and tone.

Usefulness to readers and fit with journal

Will dermatology nurses and nurse practitioners need or want to know the information?

1 2 3 4 5

Could the information presented be relevant to dermatology nursing practice?

1 2 3 4 5

Will the information presented enhance their knowledge?

1 2 3 4 5

Will the information presented improve care to patients?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the content original, relevant, and important?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the article match the tone, style, and length of other JDNA pieces?

1 2 3 4 5

Title

Does the title accurately depict the content without revealing the results?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the title sufficiently interesting to attract a reader's attention?

1 2 3 4 5

Abstract

Does the abstract give a comprehensive yet concise overall view of the content?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the abstract follow APA format?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the abstract distinct from the manuscript's introductory paragraph?

1 2 3 4 5

Introduction

Is the problem statement clearly stated within the first two paragraphs of the introduction?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the problem statement original, relevant, important, and/or innovative?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the prevalence and significance of the problem clearly established?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author reference appropriate existing, current literature on the topic, situating the study in the appropriate historical context?

1 2 3 4 5

Materials/Methods/Data

Could you feasibly reconstruct the study based on the description of its design?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the methods of obtaining and analyzing data appropriate for the study's purpose?

1 2 3 4 5

Are any pilots or trials described, including changes implemented on the final study?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author describe measures taken to ensure the ethical treatment of human/animal participants?

1 2 3 4 5

Results

Are the findings reported neutrally with no interpretations of their implications?

1 2 3 4 5

Do the figures and charts present the appropriate data in a visually appealing way that does not interrupt the flow of the text?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the figures and tables comprehensible, with a clear title?

1 2 3 4 5

Do the figures and tables contain appropriate citations?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the images of reproducible quality?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author have the appropriate permission to use any figures and tables?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the information in the visual representation of the data unique from the narrative text?

1 2 3 4 5

Do the results move from general to specific in a logical progression?

1 2 3 4 5

Do the visuals give the reader a sense of the trends uncovered?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the information reported in a way that matches that described in the Materials/Methods/Data section?

1 2 3 4 5

Discussion

Is the significance of the findings clearly stated in relation to the historical context of the topic?

1 2 3 4 5

Are all conclusions supported scientifically by the results?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author link the conclusions back to the original problem statement?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author list the limitations of the study and any effect on results they may have had?

1 2 3 4 5

Are implications for practical application and direction for future research noted?

1 2 3 4 5

Conclusion

Does the conclusion integrate the results and research question, bringing the manuscript to a logical close?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the data reported in the manuscript support the conclusion?

1 2 3 4 5

Acknowledgements

Is this list, if included, suitable for publication?

1 2 3 4 5

References

Does the author list all the most important current (within the last three to five years) existing literature on the topic?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the references appropriately formatted according to the APA?

1 2 3 4 5

Flow of text and logical progression of content

Does the manuscript follow the structure above, moving logically through introduction to conclusion?

1 2 3 4 5

Are all sections and sub-sections arranged in such a way that they enhance the reader's comprehension of the text?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the text flow smoothly, using linkages and transitions to make relationships between information clear?

1 2 3 4 5

Do tables or figures complement the flow of the text?

1 2 3 4 5

Do headings and sub-headings guide the reader visually through the manuscript?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the manuscript follow *JDNA's* submission guidelines (<http://journals.lww.com/jdnaonline/Pages/informationforauthors.aspx>) and APA format?

1 2 3 4 5

Clear writing and comprehension

Is the study's purpose clear and evident, supported by logical arguments that are easy to follow and read?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the prose clear and concise?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author present all information needed for an average reader to understand the manuscript's purpose and significance?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author explain all jargon and/or acronyms?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the text free from spelling, grammar, awkward phrasing, and other copy errors?

1 2 3 4 5

Appropriate citation of existing materials

Did the author cite existing, current literature and integrate it with his/her own research by relating his/her discovery, concept, or argument to previous discussions of the topic?

1 2 3 4 5

Did the author cite all major pieces of existing relevant work?

1 2 3 4 5

Did the author cite sources that represent both sides of any controversies pertaining to the topic?

1 2 3 4 5

Do the citations follow the format of the APA?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the citations accurate and valid?

1 2 3 4 5

Are all previously published ideas and findings correctly attributed to their source of origin?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the author refrain from self-citation?

1 2 3 4 5

Synthesis of sources

Does the manuscript integrate the existing literature with the author's own ideas to lead the reader to his/her own logical conclusion about the relative importance of the work?

1 2 3 4 5

Ethical concerns

Does the Conflict of Interest statement comply with JDNA and Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the Protection of Human Participants statement comply with JDNA and IRB requirements?

1 2 3 4 5

Are the findings and data reported in the manuscript legitimate and valid?

1 2 3 4 5

Is the prose style consistent throughout the text? (*if not, this may indicate unintentional plagiarism*)

1 2 3 4 5

Are there no unsubstantiated statements or un-cited previously published ideas?

1 2 3 4 5

Are you free from all ethical concerns pertaining to the manuscript?

1 2 3 4 5