

Tips for Reviewing a JHPN Manuscript

Thank you for agreeing to be a reviewer for JHPN! We are certain that you will find reviewing to be a great opportunity to grow professionally and to contribute to advancing our profession. A reviewer of a peer-reviewed journal has important responsibilities to the author, the journal, and in a broad sense, the profession of nursing. The reviewer 1) provides feedback to the author about the strengths and limitations of the manuscript; 2) offers information to the editor as to the appropriateness of the manuscript for JHPN, and 3) ensures that the readers of JHPN are receiving current and accurate information that will inform their clinical practice and advance the state of the science in hospice and palliative care nursing (Davidhizar & Bechtel, 2003).

Reviewing a manuscript requires that the process is done in a thoughtful, timely, and organized manner. Following are recommendations for reviewers in preparing their reviews for the journal (Davidhizar & Bechtel 2003):

- 1) Look over the abstract to make certain that the content is something you are very familiar with. It is unfair to the author, the journal, and the readers to agree to review a paper when you have limited knowledge in the content area.
- 2) Check the due date. If you are unable to meet the deadline, please respond immediately so that other reviewers can be contacted. Your ability to provide feedback in a timely manner is essential to keeping to the publication deadlines.
- 3) Ensure confidentiality. You are being entrusted with a peer's hard work. Confidentiality of the manuscript must be maintained at all times. You should not discuss or share the paper with anyone.
- 4) Review the on-line criteria for manuscript review. Become knowledgeable about the items to be covered in the review prior to reading the manuscript. It may help to have the criteria available while you are reviewing the paper so that you are able to make notes.
- 5) It is often helpful to read the manuscript twice. During the initial reading, focus on the **content**. Even if the writing style needs work, try to keep your attention focused on whether the subject matter is congruent to the goals of the journal.
- 6) The second reading is more focused on the **specifics** of the manuscript. Look at each section of the paper and make sure that it flows and is readable.
- 7) If reading a quantitative research paper:
 - a. Is the purpose of the study clearly stated? Is the significance of the problem addressed? Is there a theoretical framework and is it appropriate for the study?
 - b. Are the methods clear and appropriate for the research questions being asked? Is the sample and sampling procedure clearly described?
 - c. Are the research instruments described, appropriate for the study, and have evidence of reliability and validity?
 - d. What are the findings of the study- are they statistically significant? The analysis should make sense to the average reader- with tables and/or graphs to clarify the information.

- e. Discussion section- Are the author's conclusions consistent with the study results? Are they consistent with our criteria? Are the conclusions logical? Are the limitations identified? Does the author compare the findings of the study with past studies?
 - f. Are implications for future research discussed?
 - g. Are the research findings clinically significant? Do the findings add to nursing knowledge and evidence-based practice?
 - h. Are the references complete, current and appropriate?
- 8) In reviewing a qualitative manuscript: Use the following seven guidelines for a review, knowing that applying the same standards across all qualitative research is inappropriate (Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). Qualitative research should be (p.333):
- a. Conducted in a manner that is respectful, humane and honest.
 - b. Important- pragmatically and theoretically useful in advancing nursing knowledge
 - c. Clearly and coherently articulated- describing the research question, background material, study design, and data collection and analysis. The text should be rich in descriptive elements, containing quotes from interviews that provide support to the author's interpretations.
 - d. Conducted with appropriate and rigorous methodology
 - e. Attentive to researcher bias- i.e. reflexive processing with journaling – the approach for managing bias depends on the methodology
 - f. Following are some additional suggestions from Kristjanson and Coyle (2010).

Trustworthiness in qualitative research

The terms reliability and validity used to evaluate quantitative research methods are not appropriate for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research. The five criteria that are used to ensure that the qualitative research process is followed and emerging findings are trustworthy are: *credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity.*

Credibility is enhanced when researchers describe and document their experience as researchers. Self-reflection on the part of the researcher is an essential feature of qualitative research. A field journal is kept in which the content and process of interactions are noted, including reactions to various events. The journal becomes a record to these relationships and provides material for reflection. It is also considered to be one source of data that can be used to audit the study. A second way of establishing credibility is by consulting study participants themselves if feasible, and asking them to read and discuss the construction derived from the data analysis. Does it ring true to them? If reading is too burdensome for the individual but is of interest to them, then this can be done verbally. The technique is referred to as member checking.

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings from a study might be applied to another situation. Transferability is dependent upon the degree of similarity or 'fit' between the two situations or contexts. A study meets the criterion of 'fittingness' when its findings can 'fit' into contexts outside the study situation and when its audience views the findings as meaningful and applicable in terms of their own experiences. In order for this to be possible, the original

context must have been described adequately so that a reader can make a judgment regarding transferability.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the data. Auditability is the criterion for rigor when dealing with the consistency of data. A study and its findings can be audited when another researcher can clearly follow the decision trail used by the investigator in the study. In addition, another researcher should arrive at the same or comparable, but not contradictory, conclusions given the researcher's data, perspective, and situation.

Confirmability is concerned with assuring that data, interpretations, and outcome inquires are rooted in contexts and data collected from the study participants (subjects). Confirmability requires that the researcher clearly show the process by which interpretations of the data or study findings has been reached. This requires that data can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations is both explicit and implicit in the narrative or case study. Both the raw products and the processes used to compress them must be available to be inspected and confirmed by an outside reviewer of the study. This data or 'paper trail' is used by study auditors.

Authenticity is the fifth criterion to evaluate the rigor of qualitative research. Authenticity is demonstrated if researchers can show that they have represented a range of different realities.

- 9) For all manuscripts, it is important to give the author constructive feedback (Henly & Dougherty, 2009). State the specific page, paragraph, and lines your comments are referring to. Start with the positive comments, such as, "This manuscript makes an important contribution to our understanding of..."; "The literature review was very thorough and well-written"; or "The findings of this study have important implications for nursing practice". Giving some positive feedback may encourage an author to continue writing, even if this manuscript is in need of a great deal of work. Remember you are reviewing the manuscript not the author (Davidhizar & Bechtal, 2003).
- 10) Avoid generalizations such as, "The discussion section needs more work"; give specific recommendations such as, "In the discussion section, it would be helpful if the author described the findings in relation to each research question addressed".
- 11) Ask questions about what wasn't clear and give some suggestions as to how to clarify the statements.
- 12) When making your final recommendation, you must choose between accept, minor revisions, major revisions, reject- not suitable for any journal, reject- not suitable for *JHPN*, or accept with revision.
- 13) Know that you are not the only person reviewing this manuscript, and all reviewers recommendations are taken into consideration by the editor who makes the final decision.
- 14) Keep in mind the audience of *JHPN* is primarily the 10,000 + members of HPNA. Most of these readers are experienced nurses employed in clinical roles in Hospice or Palliative Care settings. As you review a manuscript, think about our audience and if the paper will contribute to their practice.

15) Finally, once the review process is completed and a decision sent to the author, go back and compare your recommendation to the editor's decision. Compare your reviews to others especially regarding tone and specific points you caught or missed. Diversity among reviewers is fine and at times reviewers may have very different ratings which is fine.

References

Cohen, D. & Crabtree, B. (2008). Evaluative criteria for qualitative research in health care: controversies and recommendations. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 6,(4), 331-339.

Davidhizar, R. & Bechtel, G. A. (2003). Tips for manuscript reviewers. *Nurse Author & Editor*, 13, 1-4.

Henly, S. & Dougherty, M. (2009). Quality of manuscript reviews in nursing research. *Nursing Outlook*, 57, 18-26.

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