

# How Should We Recognize the Important Role of the Peer Reviewer?

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<https://doi.org/10.3822/ijtmb.v16i2.849>

Peer reviewers are instrumental to the publication of high-quality scholarly manuscripts. However, there are challenges within current models, including how best to recognize (and reward) reviewers for their contribution. The *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork* Editorial Team is committed to enhancing the peer-review process in 2023 and invites colleagues to become reviewers.

**KEYWORDS:** massage therapy; publishing; peer review

Recently, a colleague stated that she was no longer accepting requests to act as a peer reviewer for journal articles. I was surprised by her position. Peer reviewers are paramount to the publication process; they are key to disseminating high-quality scholarly manuscripts for journals, such as the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork*. When asked why, she shared that too much of her time had been spent as a volunteer or on free labour. Her perspective was that compensation was due for this undervalued academic endeavour.

Although I completely understand my colleague's point of view, personally I hold a different perspective. I accept every review I can, provided it is within my scope and expertise. I try to "pay it forward"—investing my time and good will in the hope of future reciprocity. I have experienced the frustration of having a manuscript in peer review awaiting one more review, delaying the publication of years of work. In fact, I currently have a manuscript with colleagues that has been in the review process for a year. It may be these types of experiences that have lessened my colleague's willingness to invest without financial or reputational compensation.

Typically, reviews are 'blinded', or anonymous, where the author and reviewers are hidden from each other. The purpose of this is to reduce bias and encourage accepting or rejecting a manuscript on objective criteria. There is well-documented evidence of the exclusion of manuscripts based on perceived gender or race when authors are identified.<sup>(1,2,3)</sup>

Recently, some journals have begun to ask reviewers if they consent to their feedback and name being published with the final manuscript. While I could not find the genesis of this practice (please share if you have seen a rationale published), it seems to be in response to a growing desire from readers to understand who reviewed the article they are reading, in the same way that they wish to know who the authors themselves are.<sup>(4)</sup> In this open-review, the peer-review process continues to be anonymous, but the curtain is pulled back at the end and all the players revealed to the reader. It strikes me that this would provide an opportunity for reviewers to be recognized and for a new section of the academic curriculum vitae to be created.

Academia incentivizes authorship but not reviewers.<sup>(5)</sup> However, there are several ways that journals compensate their reviewers. These include receiving credit to reduce open-access fees paid by authors on a future manuscript submission, providing access to journal content for paid-access journals, paying an honorarium, recognizing the person as a reviewer with the published manuscript, or profiling individual reviewers.<sup>(6,7)</sup> At the *IJTMB*, we recognize our peer reviewers on an annual basis (a list of our 2022 peer reviewers follows this editorial) and through continuing education credits. Despite the tireless contribution of the researchers, educators, and practitioners listed below, there are times

when we are unable to complete the peer-review process in a timely manner due to a lack of reviewers.

In 2023, the *IJTMB* Editorial Team is committed to revising the review process. The goal is to strengthen both the ability of Associate Editors to connect reviewers to manuscripts, and to ensure the feedback provided to authors is relevant and supports the publication of high-quality scholarly work. A key part of the process is to update our peer-reviewer database to ensure the individuals included are current and have provided information about their expertise. In addition, we are assessing our feedback forms to ensure they ask for comments relevant to the type of manuscript being reviewed. Finally, we will create and curate resources for reviewers to develop the skills of individuals who want to contribute to this process but are uncertain of their ability to provide feedback in this way.

I think the process of peer review in general is worthy of review. Many editors and editorial teams, including the one at the *IJTMB*, are evaluating this. It may be that, as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly sophisticated, there will be an AI-assisted peer-review process. But until that day, the *IJTMB* continues to rely on human good will and professional contribution.

There are several benefits to participating in the review process for the reviewer. The first is to read current research. Manuscripts require review to ensure readiness for publication, but the content may become the newest evidence. Reviewers see this first. The second is to learn something. While being a reviewer will draw on your expertise, very few are experts in all aspects of a manuscript. Whether it is a new methodology or new aspect of practice, you may read something that inspires you to learn more. The final benefit, in my opinion, is to make a professional contribution. Without reviewers, manuscripts containing the newest ideas in the profession sit unevaluated. Not everyone may have the ability (or interest) to spend countless hours reviewing their colleagues' work. But I encourage you to take a little time each year to review just one manuscript.

We invite you to become a reviewer to support the ongoing publication of evidence that contributes to the body of

knowledge for therapeutic massage and bodywork. You can sign up on our website ([www.ijtmb.org](http://www.ijtmb.org)). We also invite you to join the discussion on social media (Twitter: @ijtmb\_org) to share your experiences and recommendations for the future of peer review.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: 2022 IJTMB Peer Reviewers

On behalf of the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (IJTMB)*, the Massage Therapy Foundation (MTF), and the Registered Massage Therapists' Association of British Columbia (RMTBC), we would like to thank the following individuals for their contribution in 2022 to the *Journal* as peer reviewers.

A.V. Siva Kumar	Ronald Kettering
Nemir Adjina	Alex Kidd
Philip Agostinelli	Kyung Hyun (James) Kim
Ahmad Ahmad	Dewi Umu Kulsum
Robin B. Anderson	Tegan Larin
Sanya Anklesaria	Suzanne Michaud
Derek Richard Austin	Albert Moraska
Amanda Baskwill	Niki Munk
Leisa Bellmore	Gopal Nambi
Jack Blackburn	Charlie Peebles
Kathleen Braniff	P. Darlene Peters
Emanuela Celletti	Antony Porcino
Michelle Chaves-Torres	Cynthia J. Price
Jill Cole	Stefanie Jo Pusateri
Robyn Dey	Stephen Redmon
Athena Donnan	Alexandre Ribeiro
Leora Fellus	Elizabeth Ryan
Sara Fereydounnia	Christin Sadler
Sarah Fogarty	Lynsey Saylor
Alexandra Forsythe	Julie Kathryn Scott
Luann Drolc Fortune	Jeffrey Shuman
Jimmy N. Gialelis	Matthew Stewart
Peeyoosha Gurudut	Paula Stone
Ashley Holland	Jacqueline Tibbett
Seyed Majid Hosseini	Jennifer Wheaton