

Information for Editors

Focus and Scope

Aim and Scope of the Journal

The Journal of Public Health in Developing Countries (JPHDC) is a non-profit, peer-reviewed, open-access, international, scientific journal that publishes articles in all areas of public health. The journal has a special focus on the social determinants of health, the environmental, behavioural, and occupational correlates of health and disease, and the impact of health policies, practices and interventions on the community. JPHDC also publishes occasional special editions that concentrate on specific topics or events regarding public health.

The authors from the developing countries are particularly encouraged and are welcomed to contribute in this journal

JPHDC publishes:

Original research, Reviews, Technical notes, Study protocols, as well as a broad range of informal material in the form of Editorials, Correspondence, Opinion, Book reviews, and Comments on prior papers in the JPHDC.

JPHDC Subject Areas

JPHDC particularly welcomes research in the following areas (the list is neither exhaustive, nor rank-ordered):

- General Public Health
- Epidemiology of Non-communicable and Communicable Diseases
- Disease Prevention
- Public Health Genetics and Genetic Epidemiology
- Community Health Improvement and Prevention Programmes
- Hospital and Community Infection Prevention and Control, and Health Surveillance
- Population Healthcare Needs Assessment
- Health Intelligence
- Healthcare Commissioning
- Quality of Healthcare
- Population Health Inequalities
- Health Service Evaluation
- Environmental, Chemical, and Occupational Hazards in the Community
- Health Screening
- Health Education and Promotion
- Health Behavioural Changes and Risky Health Behaviours

Accepting a position as an Editor carries with it great opportunity, and great responsibility. Editors have the opportunity to exercise considerable control over what does and does not appear in the journal. This means that the Editor also has the responsibility to make decisions as impartially as is humanly possible. The goal of JPHDC is to foster scientific communication and to maintain an archive of publications and subsequent communication that can serve as a resource for future generations of scientists.

We abide by the position statement of The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) - Responsible research publication: international standards for editors and World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) policy statement on the responsibilities of Medical Editors, which are as follows.

The Responsibilities of Medical Editors

The Editors should:

1. Respect their journal's constituents (readers, authors, reviewers, and the human subjects of research) by:
 - Making the journal's processes (e.g., governance, editorial staff members, number of reviewers, review times, acceptance rate) transparent;
 - Thanking reviewers for their work;
 - Protecting the confidentiality of human subjects.
2. Promote self-correction in science and participate in efforts to improve the practice of scientific investigation by:
 - Publishing corrections, retractions, and critiques of published articles;
 - Take responsibility for improving the level of scientific investigation and medical writing in the larger community of potential authors and readers.
3. Assure honesty and integrity of the content of their journal and minimise bias by:
 - Managing conflicts of interest;
 - Maintaining confidentiality of information;
 - Separating the editorial and business functions of the journal.



4. Improve the quality of their journal by:
 - Becoming familiar with the best practice in editing, peer review, research ethics, methods of investigation, and the rationale and evidence base supporting them;
 - Establishing appropriate programs to monitor journals' performance;
 - Soliciting external evaluations of the journal's effectiveness.

Editorial Board's Terms of Reference

1. The volunteer Editorial Board provides input, oversight, contacts and moral support, and disseminate information on JPHDC.
2. The Journal's Editorial Board consists of highly skilled, and committed international professionals. It represents the Journal's various constituencies: readers, researchers, physicians, policy makers and patients, using their skills to achieve the Journal objectives.
3. By agreeing to sit on the Board, Editorial Board members assist the Editor-in-Chief of the JPHDC to review, solicit and submit relevant papers for the Journal and support Journal efforts to secure ongoing funding.
4. The Editorial Board supports the Editor-in-Chief to maintain the Journal's principles underlying the editorial integrity and independence of the Journal e.g., supporting editorial independence, journal advertising policies and the open access platform.
5. Ongoing membership of the Editorial Board is determined by the Editor-in-Chief in conjunction with the existing Editorial Board. A new member can be nominated by 2 editors and/or board members, and is approved by a two-third vote of existing editorial board members.

Editorial Workflow

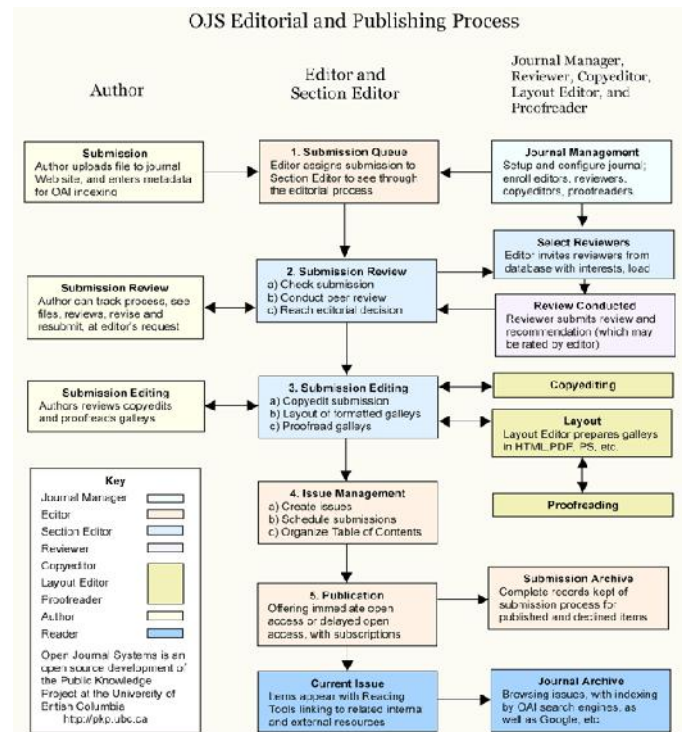
The entire editorial workflow is performed using the online Manuscript Tracking System. Once a manuscript is submitted, the manuscript is assigned to an Editor most appropriate to handle it based on the subject of the manuscript and the availability of the Editors. If the Editor determines that the manuscript is not of sufficient quality to go through the normal review process or if the subject of the manuscript is not appropriate to the journal scope, the Editor rejects the manuscript with no further processing.

If the Editor determines that the submitted manuscript is of sufficient quality and falls within the scope of the journal, he/she assigns the manuscript to external reviewers for peer-review. The reviewers submit their reports on the manuscripts along with their recommendation to the Editor.

The editorial workflow gives the Editors the authority to reject any manuscript because of inappropriateness of its subject, lack of quality, or incorrectness of its results. The Editor cannot assign himself/herself as an external

reviewer of the manuscript. This is to ensure a high-quality, fair, and unbiased peer-review process of every manuscript submitted to the journal, since any manuscript must be recommended by two or more external reviewers along with the Editor in charge of the manuscript in order for it to be accepted for publication in the journal.

JPHDC's editorial workflow is illustrated below.



High Scientific Standards

Accomplishing JPHDC's mission involves a commitment to high scientific standards and also helping scientists carry on a discussion about their work. High standards are essential, but should not imply a sort of censorship for controversial ideas. The difference between plausibility and implausibility can be difficult to decide; what is plausible to one may be implausible to another. This distinction necessarily relates to the topic of choosing reviewers for submissions. A basic principle for JPHDC is that scientific standards are served well by careful choice of reviewers. If the Editor has reason to doubt the capabilities of a candidate reviewer, then that reviewer should not be chosen to do a review. Editing of the review and response content is an important responsibility of the Editor.

Responsibility to the Reviewers

Generally speaking, if the Editor has chosen reviewers well, the recommendations from the reviewers will form the basis for the Editor's decision. In some situations, however, the Editor may choose to decide against the majority of the reviewer's recommendations, even to the point of deciding against all the reviewer's recommendations. In such cases, the Editor will be expected to provide a detailed explanation for deciding

against the consensus recommendations of the reviewers to all reviewers. Although deciding against the consensus of reviewers will be infrequent, assuming the reviewers are chosen well, such a decision is well within the authority granted to the Editor. An appeals process for any of the reviewers in such a case is discussed in the Reviewer's Guide.

Choosing Reviewers

One critical way in which Editors exercise control over the content of a journal is in the choice of reviewers. This aspect of the job is easiest when the topic of the paper is within the Editor's sphere of competence. In particular, this means familiarity with who is doing work in the subfield and so would be a candidate for reviewing the manuscript. When the content of a submission departs from the Editor's domain of expertise, the Editor should seek assistance in obtaining a list of candidate reviewers.

This assistance can include asking the author(s) of the submitted papers for reviewer recommendations, choosing possible reviewers from among the papers listed in a submission's reference list, seeking suggestions from colleagues, consulting the JPHDC reviewer list, and consulting the JPHDC Editor-in-Chief. In any case, at least two and preferably three reviewers should be chosen for all submissions.

JPHDC Editors may maintain, update and share a roster of potential reviewers, containing contact information and relevant specialties, in order to streamline the reviewer recruitment process and expedite timely reviews of submissions. The Editors are always open to nominations for high-quality scientific reviewers in any facet of public health.

Experts within the subfield of a submitted paper do not represent the only possible pool of reviewers. Some sections of the manuscript may have content that could be ably reviewed by someone not specifically working within the manuscript's subfield. For example, a paper that includes a detailed statistical analysis of some aspect of the topic could usefully be reviewed by a referee who has demonstrated a comprehensive capability with statistics, even if that referee is using that capability in a different subfield. At the Editor's discretion, any reviewer felt to be capable of contributing important information regarding the paper's content can be chosen by the Editor, even if that reviewer is only capable of reviewing a part of the whole work. Similarly, if a reviewer is capable of providing useful reviews over most of the paper, but is not qualified to comment on some portion of the work, it is nevertheless plausible for the Editor to seek the reviewer's recommendations even if s/he cannot review the entire content.

When a manuscript raises questions about some existing work, the authors of those papers being questioned are prime candidates for reviewers, of course. However, the Editor should be aware that such reviewers can have a vested interest in rejecting any submitted manuscript that criticises their work. Thus, although such reviewers are obvious choices, their reviews should be carefully considered in light of what amounts to a natural human

tendency to reject criticism. The Editor's task is to make a decision about the suitability of a submitted manuscript for publication, not to decide the scientific questions considered. That is, the Editor must judge the validity of any scientific content that is critical of existing publications. If that content is based on valid scientific principles, the paper is worthy of publication, irrespective of the responses by the author(s) of papers being criticised. Having scientific debates carried on within the contents of the journal helps the whole scientific community come to their own decisions about the issues. It is not always easy to judge when the debate is a matter of opinion rather than when one party or the other has invalid arguments. In keeping with the basic principles of JPHDC, the Editors are encouraged to allow publication when in doubt, rather than rejection.

Conflict of Interest Issues

All JPHDC editorial staff are required to declare any interests — financial or otherwise — that might influence, or be perceived to influence, their editorial practices.

In cases where there is even the appearance of conflict of interest or partiality with respect to a particular submission, the Editor should excuse him/herself from editing that manuscript and turn over the responsibility to another Editor. Examples of this include submissions of papers by:

1. Current supervisors of the Editor
2. Authors critical of papers on which the Editor was an author or coauthor
3. Students currently or formerly advised by the Editor
4. Subordinates of the Editor, or any other cases where the impartiality of the Editor is questionable.

The Editor is responsible for avoiding even the appearance of impropriety in carrying out his/her duties. Obviously, no Editor should edit a submission on which s/he is an author or coauthor.

Appeals to the Editorial Board

The JPHDC has created an appeals process for the reviewers of papers, when the Editor has decided against the recommendations of the majority of reviewers. However, no such appeal process is currently envisioned for authors. Thus, when it comes to rejections, the Editor-in-Chief fully supports the decision of the Editor when reflecting the majority recommendations by the reviewers. In the case of a rejection decision that goes against the reviewer consensus, the Editor will be submitting a detailed explanation for that decision. Only in extraordinary circumstances would the Editor-in-Chief consider overturning an Editor's decision.

If it can be demonstrated convincingly to the Editor-in-Chief that an Editor has committed an impropriety, exhibited unprofessional behaviour, or shown evident partiality, the Editor-in-Chief will consider what action is necessary, from simply reminding the Editor of his/her responsibilities up to and including immediate dismissal

of the Editor. All decisions of the Editor-in-Chief in such cases are final.

Obtaining Reviews in a Timely Manner

The Editor-in-Chief recommends that the reviews should be returned by the reviewers within three weeks. Candidate reviewers will be contacted before sending a submission to them, and their agreement to submit their review within the deadline set by the Editor should be obtained. If a reviewer does not agree to submit a review on or before the deadline, another candidate reviewer should be sought. The Editor's responsibility is to hold the reviewers to that deadline. Not all eventualities can be foreseen, but if a reviewer has a mitigating circumstance come up before the deadline that would compromise that deadline, he/she will be expected to contact the Editor to obtain permission for an extension of the deadline, which should be for no more than one to two weeks. The Editor has the discretion to permit such extensions. In the event a reviewer is unable to meet the deadline, the Editor should seek another candidate reviewer immediately, imposing the shortest possible deadline on that alternative reviewer. The goal is to limit the review process routinely to less than four weeks, and preferably to three weeks or less.

Obtaining Author Responses in a Timely Fashion

Once the author has been forwarded the reviewer comments, it is in that author's best interests to respond to those comments and revise the manuscript as quickly as possible. The Editor is responsible for setting a reasonable deadline for receiving the revised manuscript. If the reviews are generally favourable and include only minor suggestions, that deadline could be as short as two weeks. If major changes are required, it could be up to one to two months. Extensions to the Editor's deadline can be granted at the Editor's discretion to accommodate an author's circumstances. Failure to meet the deadline will result in the author having to submit the revised paper as a new submission.

Confidentiality Statement

The editors of JPHDC are required to agree to the following statement regarding editorial content:

- As a member of the JPHDC editorial team, I agree to keep confidential the content of accepted submissions until publication. I also agree to respect the privacy and intellectual property rights of authors who submit material to the journal.
- I will not disclose information concerning the journal's receipt of a submission, its content, or its review, other than in discussions with the journal's editors and peer-reviewers in the normal process of evaluation.
- I understand that the final editorial decision will be disclosed to peer-reviewers, who are bound by a similar obligation of confidentiality. Peer-reviews of rejected material will be shared with other journals only with the author's explicit consent.

Join Us as an Editor

We sincerely welcome experts and scholars to cooperate with us as our editors. For more information, please contact us at: Enquiries@jphdc.org.