



Letter to the Editor

Letter to the Editor re: “Motivating peer review: Why the peer review process is an essential part of our professional development”

I read the editorial entitled “Motivating Peer Review: Why the Peer Review Process is an Essential Part of Our Professional Development” with great interest [1]. The editors clearly described the importance of the peer review process and its contribution to scientific publication.

Science thrives on objective and clear assessment and open dialogue. Citing sources, especially for new information, is important because it proves that information or ideas originate from another source, such as a textbook, website, or research article. Failure to cite sources results in the false presentation of someone else’s ideas as one’s own; this is considered plagiarism and fraud. Various studies regarding retractions of publications have shown that the retraction rate has increased in recent years. Analysis of retracted plastic surgery studies revealed that plagiarism and fraud are among the most common reasons for retraction [2]. Fraud and plagiarism can also consist of using different terms and definitions than those used in the original work. I fully agree with the editors’ view that reviewers should disclose their potential conflicts of interest and to be truly independent of the research being reviewed. However, we see that this is not currently the case, that cliques are forming and that nepotism is occurring in certain matters. Asking authors about suggested or opposed reviewers can be theoretically helpful, but it can also be interpreted as an indicator of this. Reviewers may plagiarize original works by failing to disclose their own potential conflicts of interest. In such cases, retracting the publication can be more difficult than usual, as communication between reviewers, authors (fraudsters), and editors can be troublesome.

In addition to supporting reviewers, and attracting potential new reviewers, I believe that editors should also have a responsibility

to protect original works in their journal from fraud and plagiarism. While not every letter to the editor can be considered a valid criticism, most letters to the editor are short reviews and reports of new findings, containing criticism and suggestions for improvement. A letter to the editor can point out unfavorable aspects or errors in a paper that the author and/or the reviewer may have overlooked. A letter to the editor from the author of a novel work, containing new and proven information, serves the editors as a corrective tool and control mechanism and contributes significantly to the overall quality improvement of the journal. Editors should also take a position and carefully review studies conducted after the emergence of new knowledge, descriptions, and operative techniques. For example, if new findings, such as proven anatomical facts, invalidate previous surgical techniques, the editors should no longer publish articles on education and training or on the surgical outcomes of invalid techniques. This is, in my view, essential for the journal’s continued development. Therefore, authors of original works should be given the opportunity to criticize other works that are similar to their own. Since their letters to the editor help significantly to preventing plagiarism and fraud, they must not be suppressed or restricted. By suppressing or restricting criticism, the editors eliminate the last possibility of retracting a manuscript on the grounds of plagiarism or fraud, thus devaluing the original work and the journal itself.

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Conflict of interest

None.

References

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