



## Guideline for peer review in *Revista Española de Podología*

### Before you start...

- Read [Publication Guidelines](#) and [Recomendations for Authors](#) of Journal.
- Reject invitation if you do not have enough level of knowledge in the area.
- Review potential Conflicts of Interest with the manuscript and/or authors.
- Be sure to be able to finish the review on time.

### Steps to follow...

- Read the whole material of the manuscript entirely (tables, figures, legends and any supplemental material the authors uploaded).
- If you suspect irregularities or ethical breaches, communicate to the editor.
- Maintain confidentiality during the whole process.
- Avoid suggestion to include references of your own work or friends.

### What to assess...

The manuscript adheres properly to international guidelines for reporting scientific papers:

CONSORT - *Clinical Trials*  
STROBE - *Observationals*  
PRISMA - *Systematic Reviews*  
CARE - *Case Reports*  
...

- The paper contains the results of an original and specific study.
- The study and the results has not been published previously.
- Objectives are correctly formulated in the introduction.
- Methods, statistical analysis and any other type of analysis are well described and detailed and have been carried out following technical and scientific top standards.
- Conclusions appear in the last paragraph of the discussion and are well presented and supported by data found in the study.
- Paper is written in an appropriate scientific language and adheres to [Publication Guidelines](#) and [Recomendations for Author](#) of the Journal.

### What to assess...

- Be objective and constructive in the review. Avoid an aggressive, destructive or excessively inflamed comments.
- It is quite importante to be specific in the critique.
- Try to suggest changes; do not impose them.
- Do not try to rewrite the manuscript with your own style; It is a paper of other authors with their own style and language.

### Further Reading:

- COPE Council. COPE Ethical guidelines for peer reviewers – English. <https://doi.org/10.24318/>
- Sense about Science. Peer Review: the nuts and bolts. <http://b.link/sas-peer>

Figure 1. General Summary of Guidelines of Peer Review in *Revista Española de Podología*.

Peer review process in *Revista Española de Podología* is a pre-publication process, double-blinded (reviewers and authors are mutually anonymous) or not blinded if reviewers and authors mutually agree, closed in which reviews are not published (but it can be open if reviewers and authors mutually agree) and in which mediation with reviewers and authors are made by editors. All papers published in *Revista Española de Podología* have been reviewed by at least two external reviewers designated by the editor in charge of the manuscript. Peer review process is carried out in original papers, reviews and clinical cases types of papers of the journal.

This guide is intended to help reviewers to accomplish its work of reviewing the manuscript in a professional way while maintaining top ethical standards accepted in the scientific community.

## BEFORE YOU START THE REVIEW...

### 1. **Read the documents of *Guidelines for Authors and Recommendations for Authors of the Journal*.**

Firstly, if you are a reviewer interested in making a review of a manuscript for *Revista Española de Podología*, you need to read entirely the documents of [Guidelines for Authors](#) and [Recommendations for Authors](#) published in the authors section of the web of the journal. Those documents describe the structure of the papers and the most important points that each type of manuscript should contain.

### 2. **Do not accept the review of the manuscript if you are not familiar with the specific area of knowledge of the paper.**

Before accepting the review, be sure you have the appropriate level of knowledge on the thematic area of the paper (podiatric surgery, diabetic foot, dermatology, etc.) to carry on with the review in an impartial and professional way. It is always better to reject the review or to put the editor into knowledge that you are not comfortable with the issue you are invited to review.

### 3. **Review the potential Conflicts of Interests of the reviewer with the manuscript.**

If there exists doubts concerning potential conflicts of interests with the reviewer that can jeopardize the impartiality of the review, those doubts should be put into knowledge into the editor in charge of the manuscript. Conflicts of interests can have different characters such as personal, economic, intellectual, politics or even religious. If the reviewer has the suspicion to know the identity of the authors and thinks that is currently working in the same institution or academic center, or if recently (in the last 3 years) has done mentory works, has worked as scholar or collaborations in other papers with some of the authors, the reviewer should reject invitation. Invitation to review should also be rejected if it is the only intention to see what other groups of investigators are working on or publishing without the intention to send the review or accepting to review a paper that is very similar to one that the reviewer is currently working on or had been sent to other journal.

### 4. **Be sure you to be able to finish the review of the paper on time.**

If the reviewer has accepted all above items, he/she should accept the review only if is going to be able to finish the review promptly. *Revista Española de Podología* have an acceptance

period of 5 days for reviewers since formal invitation of the journal has been sent to them. Once the reviewer has accepted invitation, review should be finished in a maximum period of 3 weeks. If the reviewer thinks - for whatever reason - is not going to be able to finish the review in 3 weeks, is important to let it know to the editor in charge of the paper, so it can be decided if the delay is acceptable or editor should look up for other reviewer. Most of the delays that manuscripts have in the editorial process are due to delays in the reviewers work. Many times after a 3 weeks period for the assessment of a reviewer, the reviewer communicate that is not going to be able to send the review on time and it is necessary to send the paper to other reviewer and wait other 3 more weeks to have the review done. This is a frustrating process for editors and for authors that can see how it's work is delayed during the editorial process without justification.

## STEPS TO FOLLOW...

- Read entirely the whole manuscript including tables, figures, legends and any other supplemental material uploaded by the authors. If some part of the work can not be viewed or downloaded, contact with the editorial office of the journal in the following e-mail: [laura.martin@inspiranetwork.com](mailto:laura.martin@inspiranetwork.com). Do not contact with the authors directly to ask for documents even you think you know the identity of the authors. The whole process of communication with authors should be done by the editor.
- If the reviewer observes or suspects any irregularity or ethical breaches in the study or the process of investigation, it should be communicated to the editor. For example, If doubts exists about misconduct during the study process or if the reviewer notes a great similarity of the work with other work previously published by the same authors or other authors. In those cases the reviewer should communicate those doubts to the editor and avoid to investigate the facts by its own. The most appropriate conduct from the reviewer is to cooperate confidentially with the journal but not to investigate personally this potential irregularities.
- The reviewer should maintain the confidentiality during the whole review process and do not use the information obtained during the review in its own benefit or to discredit others. The reviewer should not involved others in the review process without the explicit permission of the editor. The names of those involved in the review of the paper should be communicated to the editor to give appropriate credit to them.
- Avoid suggestions for the autor to include citations of the work of the reviewer or colleges or friends just to increase the number of citations or the visibility of their works.
- Do not prolong the review unnecessarily asking for more additional information to the authors or editors. Do the review with the material that has been uploaded to the platform by the authors.

## WHAT TO EVALUATE...

Before starting the review it is important to have a clear idea of the main objectives. *Revista Española de Podología* uses peer review to

determine if the paper is technically rigorous and meet scientific and ethical standards for its publication in the Journal.

The most important point to evaluate for original papers of *Revista Española de Podología* are:

- The paper contains the results of an original and specific study.
- The study and the results has not been published previously. If the study replicates or is very similar to other published studies, authors should clearly give a proper explanation referencing existing literature that justifying the appropriateness of the study.
- Objectives are correctly formulated in the introduction.
- Methods, statistical analysis and any other type of analysis are well described and have been carried out following technical and scientific top standards.
- Conclusions appear in the last paragraph of the discussion and are well presented and supported by data found in the study.
- Paper is written in an appropriate scientific language and adheres to [Guidelines for Authors](#) and [Recommendations for Autor](#) of the Journal.
- The manuscript adheres properly to international guidelines for reporting scientific papers (i.e.: CONSORT for clinical trials, STROBE for observational studies, ...).

In reviews and clinical reports type manuscripts the best way to do the review is to follow the checklist of international guidelines ([PRISMA statement](#) for systematic reviews and [CARE statement](#) for Clinical Reports).

It is the works reviewer to make an assessment of the quality and rigor of the manuscript and propose modifications to improve it to the authors. If the paper is not clear or rigorous enough because there are missing analysis, the reviewer should point out the adicional analysis or tests that could clarify or improve the work. It is important to be clear and specific about which analysis are important or essential. It is obvious that all works can be improved, but it is not the job of the reviewer to put into question the evidence of the paper or to try to explain to the autor how the study should have been done, particularly in retrospective or cross-sectional studies in which the study is closed and it can not be returned.

It is always interesting to read other reviewers comments on the same manuscript to understand other aspects and views to the manuscript has been reviewed that perhaps have passed unnoticed and to improve reviewer skills.

## HOW TO WRITE THE REVIEW...

*Revista Española de Podología* will ask the reviewers to fill an on-line quick-answer questionnaire to evaluate the most important points of the paper. The questionnaire is adjusted to the type of manuscript (originals, reviews, case reports...). At the same time, reviewers can write a text to the authors with the most important points or reflexions of their evaluation. Reviewers can also send the original authors archive with annotations on the original manuscript showing suggested changes that would be easier to the authors. Reviewers can also write a confidential text to the editor in charge of the manuscript that can not be read by the authors.

Generally speaking, it is recommended to structure the review in the following parts: 1) General view and reflexions about the paper; 2)

Importance and significance of the study and its results in the scope of the journal with emphasis in the strengths of the study; 3) Mayor limitations that need to be corrected by the authors for its publication (if there exists); 4) A list with all changes and corrections the reviewer is suggested to authors (they can be divided into major and minor corrections).

The most important aspects in writing the review are:

- Be objective and constructive in the review. The main objective is to give an advice or feedback that help authors to improve their paper:
  - It is important to be specific in the critique. A phrase like “the introduction needs to improve” does not help authors. It is obvious that all papers can be improved but it is quite probable that some parts of the paper are correct and others could be improved. To help authors it is important to be more specific in the points or area of improvement. It would be more appropriate phrases like “the first part of the introduction is correct, although objectives of the study need to be properly described in the third paragraph. Those are not totally clear in the introduction as they are currently described” instead of just “introduction needs to improve”. Another example, reviewers quite commonly ask for current references with quotes like: “... References are not actual or current” or “the literature used by the authors is old-fashioned...” even without knowing if those statements are right or not. It is almost impossible for a paper to have all latest references as papers are constantly being published and even when actors are writing or finishing their manuscript. If the reviewer considers than some important papers are missing, those should be suggested in a specific way: “It is recommended to included references of the work Latrobe university group (Whittaker et al.) in this issue and the systematic review of Rasenberg et al. in 2021”. Is it not just enough to say: “references are not actual...”
  - To help authors it is usually a good idea to quote some referencs in the review that support the changes suggested by the reviewer. They can also help to better illustrate the idea that the reviewer tries to transmit to the authors.
- Be profesional and kind in the critique. Aggressive comments, destructive or even disrespectful critics with the authors should be avoided. This is one of the major issues for frustration y retirement of papers for its publication in the journal by the authors. Phrases like [Real example in *Revista Española de Podología*] “... Wilkoston test does not exists, it’s Wilkoxon test - this is a serious error of the authors that put into doubt that the statistical analysis have done properly...” are absolutely our of place as reviewer is making an unjustified indictment over the authors. It is important to have in mind that the editor needs an honest and fair assessment of the strengths and limitations of the manuscript.
- It is important to understand that the reviewers job is not to “impose” changes instead of “suggest” changes for the authors to improve their paper. Phrases such us [Real example in *Revista Española de Podología*] “... Remove the flow diagram, it is unfair, this is not a bibliographic review...” do not follow that idea and it is recommended to change the aggressiveness of the comments. It is recommended to change by “... It is recommended

to assess the appropriateness of the flow diagram in the paper. Data reported in the diagram is also reported in the results section and all that information could be redundant”.

- Remember that you, as reviewer, are assessing the paper of other authors with its own style and language. Do not try to re-write if the paper is clear and understandable. Although changes in language can be recommended to improve the clarity of the manuscript, those should be done with respect to the authors. In this sense, be conscious of sensibilities that exists regarding written language of each author, specially with non-foreign language authors.
- *Revista Española de Podología* allows open comments to the authors and closed comments to the editors that can not be read by the authors. In the confidential comments, the reviewer can express personal recommendation for acceptance, rejection or acceptance with major/minor changes. Be sure that the comments and recommendations made for the editor are consistent with the assessment done to the authors. In the sense, it is recommended most of the feedback made by the reviewer to be open to authors. Do not use confidential comments to denigrate or to joke about the authors and their work knowing that those comments can not be read by the authors.
- Avoid make negative comments of other similar studies from other authors or from the same investigation group.

## FINAL POINTS ...

- Badly, destructive or excessively inflamed reviews with even contemptuous comments could be modified or edited by the editors before sending to authors. In extreme cases, the review could be fully removed. Although it is not required, editors can inform reviewers that the review has been modified to equilibrate the most destructive or inflamed points used by the reviewer. This process of communication with the reviewer

can be used also as a learning method for future reviews of the reviewer.

- Remember that the work of the reviewer is not to judge the paper or to determine which papers should be accepted and which should be rejected. The reviewer can make recommendations, but the final decision of acceptance, rejection or major/minor changes of the manuscript is a decision finally made by the editor with the reviewer recommendation together with many other different factors.
- If the review of the manuscript is made by the editor instead of an external reviewer (this is a common practice when a review is too delayed), it is convenient to do this in a transparent way showing that the review has been made by the editor (not blinded) and not under the name of an anonymous additional reviewer.
- It is beneficial for reviewers to take advantage and improve this reviewer skills of scientific papers. For this reason it is encouraged to students, residents and senior clinicians to be part of mentor's programs that could exists in their institutions or academic centers. Guided reviews supervised by more experienced peers are also usually helpful. There also exists on-line free training courses for reviewers of scientific journals such as those of Elsevier (<https://researcheracademy.elsevier.com/navigating-peer-review/certified-peer-reviewer-course>) or Web of Science Academy (<https://webofscienceacademy.clarivate.com/learn>).

## REVIEWS OF THE REVIEW

Although it is not a common practice, sometimes reviewers can be asked to review again the manuscript with the authors modifications to be sure that the changes suggested have done properly. In those cases, editors can have doubts that changes has been undertaken correctly and ask the reviewer to see if the requirements suggested were carried out.