

Webinar August 13, 2019

Responding to peer reviewers



CIRHT

The Center for International
Reproductive Health Training
at the University of Michigan



**SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Hello!



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PREPSS

Pre-Publication
Support Service

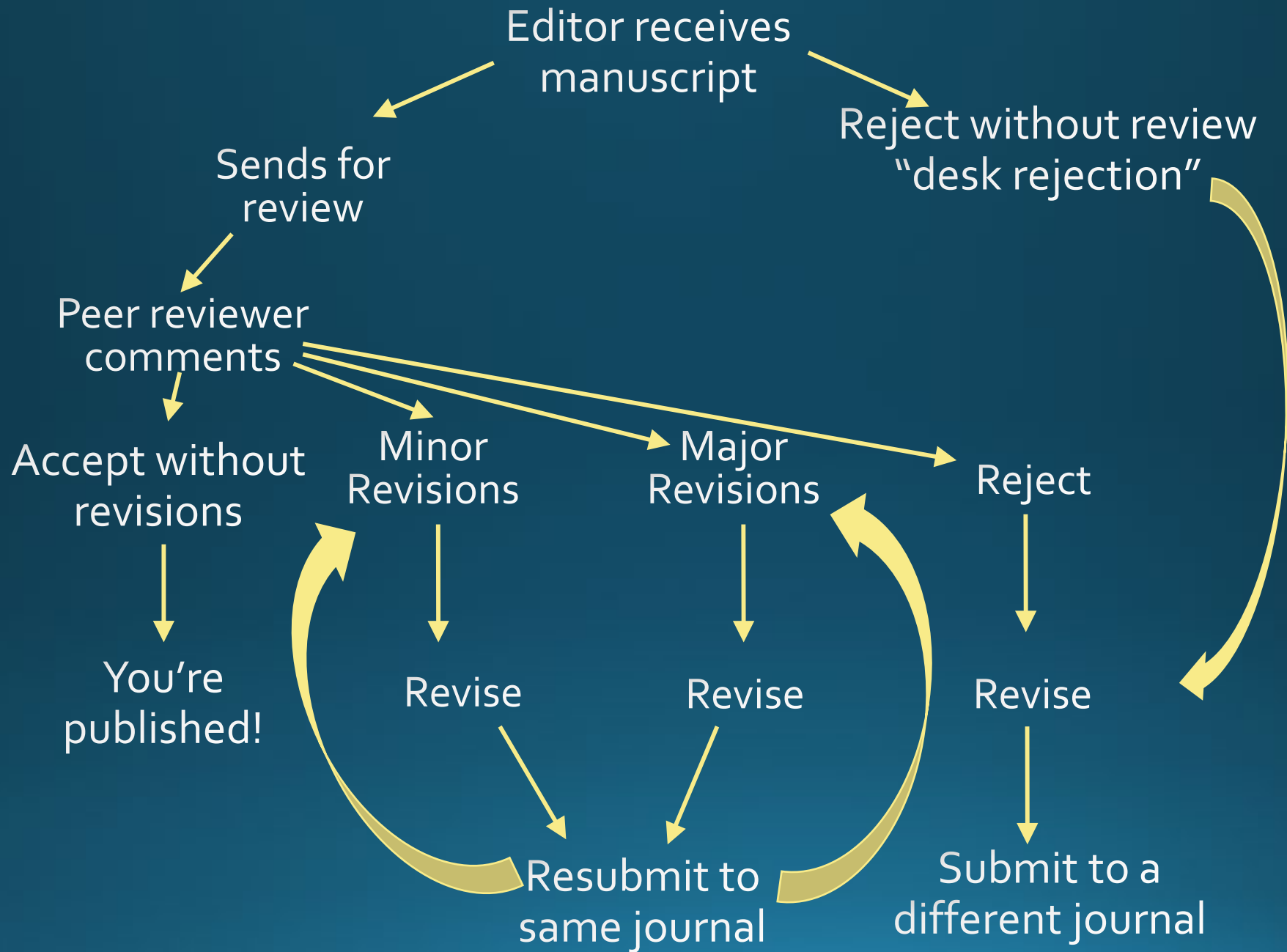
Outline of Webinar

- Peer review process
- Responding to reviewers
 - Don't get discouraged
 - Be organized
 - Make it easy for the reviewer to understand what you did and find your changes
 - Give a complete answer
 - Requesting clarification
 - Disagreeing with the reviewer
 - Additional tips

Learning Objectives

1. To better understand how the peer-review system works for academic journals.
2. To learn strategies for responding to peer reviewers that will help you get published.

The Peer Review Process



Peer Review Process

- Reviewer typically blinded (authors do not know who reviewed paper)
- Sometimes authors are blinded (reviewer does not know names of authors)

Rejections without review

- Often is a mismatch between the article and journal scope
- Or you may need to go to a less prestigious journal

Rejections with review

- Free advice!
- Papers published after having first been rejected elsewhere receive significantly more citations on average than ones accepted on first submission.
 - (based on 80,748 scientific articles published among 923 bioscience journals between 2006 and 2008)
 - information provided by the papers' authors.

Responding to Reviewers

Don't get discouraged

“

Deep down, academics want the same thing as everyone else: acceptance, with minor revisions.

”

From: **Public Health Reports** <onbehalfof@manuscriptcentral.com>
Date: Wed, Sep 26, 2018 at 5:51 PM
Subject: PHR-18-0318-: Decision Letter and Comments from Public Health Reports
To: <eaugust@umich.edu>
Cc: <phr@sagepub.com>, <Andrey.Kuzmichev@hhs.gov>, <Jared.Stokes@hhs.gov>

26-Sep-2018

Manuscript ID: PHR-18-0318-
Title: Writing assignments in epidemiology courses: how many and how good?

Dear Dr. August:

Your manuscript has completed the external peer review phase of consideration. Although the Editorial Committee has decided not to accept your manuscript for publication in its current form, the Committee agrees to reconsider your manuscript if you submit revisions that satisfactorily address the enclosed comments.

We ask that you submit a revised manuscript, along with a cover letter listing your point-by-point responses to each reviewer comment (and each editor comment, if provided). Please see further instructions below.

- First two lines are negative... but don't get discouraged!
- Ask yourself if you have the opportunity to resubmit. That's all that matters.

Be organized

The response to reviewers should be VERY WELL organized. Make it as easy as possible for the reviewers.

Dear Editor and Reviewers,

Please accept our revised manuscript and note our point-by-point response to each reviewer below for Manuscript ID: PHR-18-0318 *Writing assignments in epidemiology courses: how many and how good?*

Our revised manuscript continues to meet the journal's format requirements, including the abstract word count and overall word count.

We look forward to your reply and decision.

Thank you,
Ella August, Karen Burke, Cathy Fleischer, and Jim Trostle

Response to Reviewer 1



Thank you for your comments. Our responses are below in blue. Please note that the line numbers we refer to are on the clean copy (not the tracked-changes copy).

This ms has a number of strengths. The gum-shoe methodology of requesting and analyzing syllabi from actual epi courses provides important information about the types of writing assigned in epi classes and the lack degree to which instructors assume students will know how to produce the type of writing they are requesting.

I have made numerous suggestions on the attached document. This ms provides useful information and analysis but it needs to be refined in a number of ways and key points need to be developed throughout. If revised, this will be a very useful paper for the new section of PHR and for those of us in the field who are trying to improve how we teach students to write.

1. Abstract, second paragraph: "included recommended features." Wording could be more precise.

We have reworded this sentence to be more specific (line 40).

2. Abstract, Results. Second sentence: this sentence has a lot packed into it. I suggest breaking it out and explain what you mean by "disciplinary format" and "allowing for some type of process to support students in developing their writing process."

We have split the second sentence into two sentences and explained what is meant by "disciplinary format" and "allowing for ... process..." (lines 44-46).

Give a complete answer

Reviewer #1:

1) Throughout the manuscript please replace "methylation" with "DNA methylation" throughout to be more precise.

We replaced “methylation” with “DNA methylation” or “DNAm” throughout the manuscript.

- Do not simply say “Okay” or “Yes.”
- Write a complete sentence clearly stating what you did in response to the comment.

Make it easy for reviewers to understand what you did & find changes

3) On page 4, the authors state "Furthermore, factors that influence the methylation of specific genes may be more informative than measures of global methylation." Why is this more informative? Please clarify.

We added the following text on p. 4 to clarify why gene-specific studies may be more informative than studies of global DNA methylation:

"Gene-specific DNA methylation studies may be more informative than studies of global DNA methylation, since gene-specific studies have the potential to identify specific biological pathways influenced by life course SES."

- Summarize what you changed
- Tell reviewer where change is in paper
- Include a quote in your response

*Request clarification
rather than trying to guess*

Please fit random intercept, random slope (random coefficient) multi-level models to describe the association between DNA methylation and life-course SES.

We'd like to request clarification from Reviewer 2 regarding the request to fit random intercept, random slope models. We think the reviewer may be suggesting that we add a random slope for site type to allow the correlation structure to differ across site types (i.e., promoter sites and shore/shelf sites), but it is also possible that the reviewer is asking us to add a random slope for SES.

It's okay to disagree with a reviewer, but carefully craft your response

- Okay to respectfully disagree with reviewer's comment.
- Provide solid arguments to support your point of view, including references.
- Reviewers should get impression that you have taken their comments *seriously* and have done your best to improve paper accordingly.

1

First identify something on which you agree with reviewers

2

Explain what you disagree with and provide support for your argument.

We agree with Reviewer 2 regarding the importance of data preprocessing for ensuring the integrity of microarray data. However, we strongly disagree with the assertion that the quality control/preprocessing practices for DNA methylation that were implemented in the current study compromise the internal and external validity of downstream analyses and constitute “cherry picking at the genome-wide level.” These practices have been used in numerous population-based epigenetic studies, including the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (Liu et al. 2013 in Human Molecular Genetics), the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) study (Demearath et al. 2015 in Human Molecular Genetics), and others (see Mariono et al. 2015 in Genome Biology). Furthermore, our QC/preprocessing procedures are consistent with recommendations made by chip manufacturers (such as Illumina) and field standards.

Additional Tips

Additional Tips

- Always be respectful toward the reviewers
- Add a word of thanks to each reviewer for taking the time to suggest improvements and try to adhere to as many suggestions as you can agree with

Key Points:

- Crafting response to reviewers is worth the effort and time
- Make response organized and easy for reviewers to understand
- Request clarification where necessary
- Ok to disagree with the reviewers; be tactful

Thank you for your time!

We are happy to answer any questions that you might have now

or

Email us at prepssadmin@umich.edu anytime!

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