Editorial

Update on the review process and publishing at the *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience*

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This issue's editorial is an effort to familiarize authors and reviewers with the current review process and publishing paradigm at the *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience* (*JPN*). It is hoped that this will better equip potential authors to decide on the suitability of *JPN* as the journal of choice for their submission and help them to construct their articles in agreement with the journal's expectations. The editorial is also written with the belief that transparency with regards to the review and publishing processes may contribute to confirming confidence in the quality of those processes.

As the journal's name implies, *JPN* focuses rather narrowly on research and review papers at the intersection of psychiatry and neuroscience that inform us on the neural mechanisms involved in psychiatric disorders and their treatment. Therefore, papers dealing with clinical psychiatry issues but with no insight into neural mechanisms or papers dealing with general neurobehavioural mechanisms with unclear relevance to any specific psychiatric disorder are considered to be outside the scope of *JPN*. The Psychopharmacology for the Clinician columns on the last page of the journal are the one exception to the rule that papers must include both psychiatry and neuroscience components. These columns are meant to suggest treatment strategies based on the current state of the clinical experimental evidence to clinicians treating patients with psychiatric disorders.

Founded in 1991, *JPN* is the official journal of the Canadian College of Neuropsychopharmacology. The journal is currently published by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA), which is a not-for-profit organization. Consistent with its mission to publish papers at the intersection of psychiatry and neuroscience, *JPN*'s editorial board consists of a mix of active researchers in both clinical psychiatry and basic neuroscience relevant to psychiatry. Despite (or because of) its Canadian roots, *JPN* has become an international jour-

nal; for example, in the last 2 years, the journal has published papers originating from 18 different countries. The 2-year impact factor for *JPN* is 6.24 (2012 ISI data), ranking 11 out of 135 psychiatry journals and 27 out of 252 neuroscience journals. *JPN*'s 5-year impact factor is 6.47. The editors of *JPN* continue to apply policies that emphasize the quality of the articles published rather than their immediate popularity.

JPN is an open access journal with all articles downloadable for free online; there is a print version available for purchase by subscription. The journal has been open access online since 2000, because the editorial board strongly believes in free global access to research knowledge. The journal was able to function without any publication charges until 2010. However, in the face of a deficit due to decreased advertising revenues, the journal was forced to institute colour processing charges in 2012 and a $1500 publication charge starting in 2013 for each research and review paper published in order to maintain a viable open access paradigm. According to ISI data, *JPN* is the highest ranking open access journal in biological psychiatry.

JPN is one of the few journals in which research articles are required to include a limitations section in both the discussion and the abstract. This section is important because it allows readers to better assess the implications of the work, and indeed, the authors, being intimately involved in the research, are the best qualified to provide a nuanced discussion of the limitations. On the other hand, a limitations section is also beneficial to the authors in that it may serve to instil confidence in the reader that the authors fully understand the caveats of their studies and may sometimes give the authors the opportunity to add points that mitigate the limitations.

With regard to the review process, *JPN* does not guarantee ultra-fast review because of the time necessary for a thorough and expert review. The process begins by submitted articles

being assigned to 1 of the 2 editors-in-chief (EIC), who reads the article and screens it for general scientific quality, originality and relevance to the scope of the journal. The EIC decides either to reject without review or send the manuscript out for external peer review. Rejection without review most often occurs because the paper is outside the scope of *JPN*; has major, obvious limitations, such as very small sample size; or is so poorly written that it is not likely to receive favourable reviews. Although grammatical errors alone will not warrant rejection, papers may be rejected for this reason if the errors are serious enough to compromise the accuracy or meaning of the paper. Highly specialized papers may be rejected if they are not deemed to be of potential interest to the general readership of *JPN*. This first screening by the EICs serves to identify papers within the scope of the journal and, importantly, to reduce the burden on external reviewers. The 2 EICs are in continual consultation to ensure consistency of editorial policy and decision and keep each other aware of all decisions at all stages on all manuscripts. A frequent reason for the EICs to consult is to discuss whether a specific paper falls within the scope of *JPN*. Because of the increasing number of manuscripts being submitted to *JPN* each year, we are continually having to re-evaluate priorities for the types of papers the journal is interested in publishing, in consultation with the editorial board.

For papers going on to external review, the EIC identifies relevant, qualified reviewers publishing in the field, usually using PubMed or similar databases, our own database of reviewers accumulated over the years, the authors' suggested reviewers and the reference list in the manuscript. Publications by authors' suggested reviewers are examined on PubMed to determine if they are considered appropriate experts in the field. *JPN* tracks the number of reviews completed for the journal by each reviewer to avoid overloading them. The reviewers finally selected remain anonymous to authors; however, reviewers are aware of the authors' identities. Once they accept to review, reviewers are asked to return their reviews within 3 weeks. With very few exceptions, at least 2 reviews are obtained before a decision is made. This may require asking anywhere from 4 up to a record 20 people in the field to review the manuscript before 2 reviews are delivered. One scenario that results in delays occurs when a reviewer accepts to review the manuscript but does not deliver the promised review within the 3-week deadline. This requires looking for an alternative reviewer and leads to a further delay of 3 weeks until the new reviewer completes his or her review. (Reviewers, please take note.)

Once the reviewers' comments are received, these are reviewed by the EIC and the paper is either rejected at this stage based on the reviews or sent for statistical review by one of our Associate Editors in statistics. After evaluating all reviewers'

comments, including the statistical review, the EIC decides to either accept the paper without revision (rarely), reject it, or send it back to the authors for minor or major revision. Authors are asked to submit a revision if the paper has not been deemed by the reviewers to contain any major flaws and if the issues raised by the reviewers are potentially able to be addressed. Most papers require what may be considered "major revision." Once the revised version is submitted together with detailed responses to each of the reviewers' comments, the EIC may either accept the revised manuscript or send it back to the original reviewers for them to assess the adequacy of the revisions. A final decision to accept or reject (or ask for further, usually much less extensive, revisions) is then made by the EIC. In 2013, a total of 265 research or review papers were submitted to *JPN*, and our acceptance rate was about 23%. *JPN* does have an appeal process; requests for appeal should be accompanied by a substantive description of additional considerations.

With regards to the timeline for the review process, decisions to reject without review are rapid and communicated to the authors 2–10 days after submission. Time from submission to authors receiving the first decision (accept, reject or revise) based on reviewers' comments is generally 2 months. Authors are given a maximum of 2 months to revise their manuscripts. Following acceptance, the paper is processed for publication and proofread by the author. Papers are posted online as "epub ahead of print" an average of 2.5 months after acceptance and are indexed in PubMed as soon as the epub is posted.

The editors heartily thank the many expert reviewers who have volunteered their time and expertise to the peer review process at *JPN*. We are consistently amazed at the insightful and detailed reviews provided by our many reviewers, gratis. The constructive content and respectful tone of almost all reviews suggests that the main motivation of reviewers is a desire to contribute to the scientific community and enhance scientific excellence. Our reviewers for the previous year are listed and acknowledged each year in the January issue. We extend special thanks to our hard-working Associate Editors in statistics, Lawrence Annable and Norbert Schmitz, who provide the statistical reviews for papers published in *JPN*, and a warm welcome to Aurélie Labbe, a new addition to the team of Associate Editors in statistics. Grateful appreciation is also extended to the Associate Editors for donating their time to write and review editorials, review research papers and Psychopharmacology for the Clinician columns and contribute to policy discussion and to the editorial advisory board for their contributions to these efforts. Last but not least, we are grateful for CMA Publications' continuing support of *JPN*'s editorial vision and open access publication paradigm, and for the dedicated work of the publications staff.