September 19 to 26, 2016, marks the second annual Peer Review Week, the recognition of the process of peer review (The Scholarly Kitchen, 2016). This recognition is not limited to the peer review aspect that The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing and other peer-reviewed journals provide. Rather, this recognition includes all forms of peer review, such as reviewers engaged in competitive abstract submissions, grants, professional reviews, promotion and tenure review in academic settings, and, of course, journal and other publication reviews.

Reviews can be open or masked (i.e., blinded) in a double or one-way method. Open reviews refer to those where the author and the reviewers are known to each other. This type of review typically occurs during such activities as promotion and tenure reviews. The committee knows who is submitting the material, and the submitter (i.e., the person seeking promotion) knows who serves on the committee. Single masked or blinded reviews occur when one party is known to the other but the second party does not know who the other is. This occurs in some competitive abstract submissions or book reviews. The submitter’s name may be associated with the submission but that person does not necessarily know who serves as reviewers. A double masked or blind process, which is the process we use at The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing, means that the reviewers do not know who submitted the article they are reviewing and the submitting author does not know who the reviewers are.

Reviews are always done in some context. For example, grant reviews often have calls (i.e., request for proposals [RFPs]) for a specific topic and defined criteria with points assigned to various areas. Promotion and tenure committee members often have vaguer statements with which an individual’s record is compared. Conference abstracts typically are expected to relate to the theme of the conference.

Reviewers might be asked to rate various statements, using a Likert-type scale. Others might be asked to accept, defer, revise, or reject a submission. Still others are asked for narratives about the submission. In short, the approach to peer review is variable.

What is standard about peer review is that people devote a lot of time in providing their expert opinions about whatever they are reviewing. Few reviewers in nursing are paid for their time. Yet, most reviewers are willing to contribute vast amounts of time to be sure that the profession continues to improve. Peer review is not designed to keep out certain ideas or individuals. Rather, it is designed to stimulate better thinking and approaches so the profession continues to be relevant to the society it serves.

Each year in the November issue of the Journal, I thank reviewers who valiantly serve our authors in helping them to the best submissions possible. Yes, you will see that note of thanks in a couple of months. However, this new move to have a week in September devoted to recognizing those who serve as reviewers seemed too good to pass up. Peer review is a rigorous endeavor. It is time and talent consuming. The quality of the reviews is what makes good manuscripts great! It is what makes the best grants fundable, and it is what makes each of us consider whether what we do is worthy.

Thank you to all who are engaged in the process of peer review!

REFERENCE

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