Howard Goldman :

Hello everyone. Welcome to a Psychiatric Services special podcast focusing on reviewing for the journal.

I'm Howard Goldman and I'm going to be the moderator today. For those of you who don't know me, I'm a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Maryland School of Medicine and I'm the Editor Emeritus of the journal we have for you today that, as I said, this special session on reviewing. We have two expert commentators who are joining us. We have Alison Cuellar and Lisa Dixon, and the first order of business is that they'll each introduce themselves.

I should say that we have a special focus on new reviewers and it had interesting origin. The whole idea for this podcast came from the Anti-Racism Advisory Group.

Alison, you want to introduce yourself?

Alison Cuellar:

Yes. Thank you, Howard. I'm a Professor of Health Administration and Policy at George Mason University in our College of Public Health, and I'm also a Co-Editor of the Psychiatric Services Economic Grand Rounds Column.

Howard Goldman :

Thanks, Alison.

Lisa, you want to introduce yourself to everyone?

Lisa Dixon:

Sure thing. I just also want to thank both of you for participating in this podcast. I am the current Editor of Psychiatric Services. I greatly indebted to my predecessor Howard Goldman, who's been a mentor for me for most of my career.

I am a Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University, Vagelos, College of Physicians and Surgeons and the New York State Office of Mental Health. I just wanted to elaborate a little bit on the origin of this podcast.

We have an anti-racism advisory group that as part of sort of the overall management and oversight of the Journal and there was a lot of interest in promoting the participation of young people, of people from underrepresented minorities, and minoritized individuals, to really bring them into this process and make the submission review cycle much more transparent.

This podcast is a product of that process and we hope that it just starts the conversation and promotes participation and inclusion in psych services processes.

Howard Goldman :

Thanks, Lisa. Your comments and these origins just reinforced for me the way I have always thought about journals as a community, a community of scholars and writers and readers and reviewers. And here to tell us a little bit more in detail her thoughts about the reviewing process is Alison, who's going to start right off with the receipt of an invitation to review and she's going to spend some time walking us through her thoughts about the process.

Alison Cuellar:

Absolutely. Thank you, Howard.

So you've received this invitation to review and it typically arrives as an email. And so the way I approach it is as follows. I look at in that email, it'll give you the title and a brief description of the article, and then you want to consider the deadline because it also tells you when the editor would like that review back.

I look at that and I compare the description of the article to my expertise. I look at my availability because I know that I need to produce this review in a timely manner. And so if you have the expertise to the evaluate the article and you have the time to review it in a timely manner, then you're really ready to set off and accept that invitation.

You then get a set of subsequent emails from the Journal that tee you up to make this all very easy for you and your task is really to provide two separate communications. One goes to the editor and one goes to the author. The one to the editor, you write last, but I'll talk about it first because it's the shorter one of the two.

You're basically in that letter, indicating to the editor, whether you think the manuscript should be accepted as-is or with minor changes that you've noted, or revised and resubmitted along the lines that you recommended or rejected. And you want to explain to the editor briefly why. Why was the article important or not? What words, major strengths and weaknesses, to help the editor understand ultimately what your recommendation was. Because remember, there's another reviewer potentially and the editor's in a position of having to reconcile those and think about this article in the broader context of other things that have been submitted to the journal.

The point here is that this is meant to be helpful to the editor, of course, and this communication does not go to the author. If there were ethical issues, you would want to raise them in this letter, especially if you aren't sure. The other communication is the one to the author.

Howard Goldman :

Alison, can I stop you here a second?

Alison Cuellar:

Of course.

Howard Goldman :

While I already have, so pardon me for stopping you. I think there are a few things that you might want to elaborate on at this point in the process.

First of all, psych services is a blind review. That's not true of all journals. So sussing out a conflict of interest can be something of a mystery, waiting to be solved. You might not know that you have a conflict of interest, for sure, because you just will have a suspicion and you need to communicate it in that way.

Now, some journals, we're not being entirely specific to psych services. Some journals, the author will be known to you and then it'll be clear if you have a conflict of interest and not everything that seems like a conflict of interest is a conflict and that's something that sometimes it's necessary to work out with the editor.

Lisa Dixon:

Yeah, I think that my advice around a conflict of interest is if you think you have a conflict of interest, you probably have a conflict of interest.

Alison Cuellar:

If you recognize the work as being something of a friend or a relative, or someone that you have a history with, then you would note that to the editor as a conflict of interest.

Lisa Dixon:

I think it's complex though because of course, one is asked to review articles that generally would be somewhere close to your expertise. And so even if you don't know the authors, you might know their work. People can get competitive and I mean that's just a normal thing. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but you have to really be able to say, "Can you judge the work on its merits?" This is where one has to just try to again, be transparent and honest. You could even tell the editor that you're not sure.

Howard Goldman :

So Alison, why don't you pick up now with the second communication to the author.

Alison Cuellar:

The second communication is the author communication and this is your detailed review, going to the author as implied by the name. Your name at Psychiatric Services does not go on this document. Other journals don't have blind review, but in Psychiatric Services it's blind. You, as a reviewer, will not be named when the author receives your comments. How long is this document? It's as long as it needs to be for you to communicate the points that you're trying to make. Reviewers have different styles and strengths. You be true to your style and your expertise that you're contributing to this particular article.

You want to be thoughtful and constructive. The big picture here, as Howard emphasized in the beginning, is that this is a collegial dialogue. You're trying to be helpful. You're trying to be useful. So, I literally like to imagine that I'm sitting across from the author or I'm imagining them reading my review. I read their manuscript, I learned from them, now I'm reciprocating and I'm trying to provide useful information back to the authors. I think if we keep that kind of framework in mind, then it keeps this... It makes a process more constructive and painless on both sides.

How do I approach this? Well, everyone has their own style, but I like to read the article once through. I get an overall impression. I then read it again and I start to make notes. I try to use plain language and I start with my overall impression paragraph that says the highlights, what I thought the major question the author was addressing, the major strengths and weaknesses. And then I go into a list of comments which I've then organized by topic.

I also find it helpful to start with the more positive feedback to the authors, in the spirit of engaging them. If I start with a heavy criticism, I may lose their attention and I'm really trying to be constructive throughout. It may not be that Psychiatric Services even accepts this article and they may not accept it for a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with this particular manuscript. That's the editor's decision. But I want the comments that I make to be constructive and things that the authors can find useful, even if they're sending it to another journal next.

So my general impression is what I start with and then I go into the details. I try to, whenever possible, this is one of these practical tips, provide page number and line number references for the authors, so they can see what I'm speaking to in their manuscript.

I try to indicate the work strengths and weaknesses, the quality, the completeness, what did I see as major flaws for instance, and then provide feedback for that. How novel was the work? What is the contribution? How does it fit into the literature? Again, I'm reviewing a piece where I feel like I have

some expertise. I'm going to be familiar with this space. I don't spend a lot of time commenting on the existing literature, unless I feel it was misrepresented, or that a key piece was missed. These articles have pretty tight word limits and I think that's part of what we need to consider when we're dialoguing with the authors about what are the most important things that I would suggest be changed.

I try, as I said, to give positive feedback first, and part of my effort to engage in dialogue with the authors. I don't want to go overboard, if I'm recommending major revisions or even rejection to the editor, it doesn't make sense for me to give a long list of all the positive things about the article with a few comments about weaknesses, which then leaves the author confused about where to go next with this particular manuscript.

Why do they think their evidence is different in their conclusions? Some of what I'm going to say in my comments, very much depends on the article, the topic of the article, the methods that the article is using. But in general I'm looking at what is the conceptual model they're providing? Does it motivate the analysis? This would be for something that's a research article for example. What about their design? But in any case, whether it's a research article or a commentary or an open forum type of article for Psychiatric Services, the evidence they're presenting needs to align with the discussion in the conclusions that they draw.

I also look at if the paper has tables or figures. I look at what are they adding? Do they help me to understand what's going on in the article? Do they not contribute to that? Are they themselves not clear? Table or figures should stand on its own and be completely understandable by the reader as a standalone product, and so I pay attention to that and I provide comments back to the author on that.

Certainly if you came across any factual errors, you would note those in the literature review. If you thought there were major citations missing, or a different point of view that's relevant to the particular article, I would note those. And again, organizing it by theme. I usually use bullet points and then I refer the author to the place in their manuscript that's relevant to my comments that I'm making.

Howard Goldman :

Do you distinguish between grammar and spelling and certain semantic comments that you might make about word choice, which might be carrying a connotation that you think is inappropriate?

Alison Cuellar:

Definitely. So there's a fine line even there with words. I note when I thought a section wasn't clear and that has to do with sort of ambiguities. If I don't understand it, another reader might not understand it either. Those are absolutely fair game, if you will, to point out.

When it comes to grammar and spelling, in fact, I try very hard to have it not even sway my overall view of the work and that's because Psychiatric Services has an amazing editorial staff that will work with the authors to clean all of that up. Really we're focused here on the contribution of the article and the conclusions that they're drawing from. We want the conclusions to be consistent with the evidence that's presented.

Suppose this is a research article or a brief report, then those conclusions in that discussion needs to align, and there may be words there that I find too strong or too weak to describe what I feel the authors have presented as part of their argument, so that I believe that's also fair game. That's different than the sort of grammar spelling, which are actually easy to find, and some of the research that's been done on reviewing, I gather that 80% of reviewer comments come down to things like grammar and spelling, rather than focusing on the contribution.

Howard Goldman :

Always distressed me that people spend so much time on Oxford commas when we have such a great editorial staff. But an example of a semantic issue is in our subspecialty in economics, distinguishing some authors choose to use access, the term access when what they've done is measure probability of use. And sometimes I've wrestled with an author about which is the more appropriate terminology to use.

So those things I accept when reviewers would tell me, but not when they're providing me with grammatical corrections.

Alison Cuellar:

Right.

Lisa Dixon:

I think the choice of language can have different impact on different types of papers. So another really challenging situation that sometimes requires repetitive dialogue with the authors is the difference between correlation and causation.

Often authors will use language suggestive of causation, when the work doesn't necessarily support causation. And so these are things, for example, that I know I drill down on a little bit because-

Howard Goldman :

Yeah, I think that's the most common feedback I get from reviewers about a paper, or that I conveyed to an author, to be careful about.

Alison Cuellar:

Some of the wording is going to differ by discipline. I agree that often authors will use associations and correlations right up to the conclusion when they conclude that practitioners should change their behavior, policymakers should change policy, and that's a causal conclusion. So that's going to be one of my pet peeves as a reviewer, certainly.

Lisa Dixon:

Alison, I have a question for you. Generally speaking, our reviewers will know about, let's say there's like four important topics that one needs to have expertise in to do the review and a reviewer might have expertise in two of the areas, like the background and something about the methods, but they're not statisticians, or they don't know about this kind of psychosocial intervention. And so how do you suggest that reviewers acknowledge what they know about and what they can't comment on? Or should they just not go there?

Alison Cuellar:

So personally, I am very upfront about that. I'll say I got to a particular section and in my expertise, or I didn't have the expertise, or I don't have depth or strength in this particular area, but I had the following questions and so they might be naive questions on my part. This might be something that's well known to a clinician. But I put it there and then I would also echo that in my letter to the editor to say, "I came up to this particular section and I personally don't have the clinical background as a health services researcher, health economist, but this would be something for a clinician to weigh in on."

Lisa Dixon:

And so it's okay to acknowledge your limitations in your review?

Alison Cuellar:

I do try to say where I don't have the depth or strengths to be able to comment on a particular section and I hope that's okay with the editor.

Lisa Dixon:

For me, I think it's great. That's exactly what I think. That's the kind of transparency. And you can be a great reviewer and not know everything about everything in the paper. That's part of what I want.

Howard Goldman :

Right, especially with this serving as an encouragement to new reviewers and people who are reviewing from an ever expanding recognized areas of experience, like lived experience for example.

Alison Cuellar:

I think even in the methodologically, if I feel I have expertise, I can say, "I'm not sure why you did it this way. I would've done it that way," but leave the door open for the author to explain something that might be unfamiliar to me or why I might not have used it in that instance. I tend to pepper my comments also with question marks.

Lisa Dixon:

I think that contributes to the mutual learning, that this process should be a learning process for the reviewer, and for the authors. And there was something that you said that I, Alison, that I really, really like that even if the paper's rejected, what we want is the review process to be a helpful, constructive one for the author, so that they can move forward with their work criticism.

Alison Cuellar:

I find under the folks I'm training to conduct reviews, their initial instinct is to look for those gotchas. Like, "Oh, I gotcha. This is a mistake. I'm going to highlight it." That's not what to review exercise is about.

Howard Goldman :

There are times when a paper might become a definitive article on a topic. And I know that as a reviewer I feel, and as an editor of course, I feel an obligation to pay special attention that our communication won't end up misleading people in an erroneous direction. But sometimes it's just, it's not entirely clear and it may not be of such great consequence that it's not yet entirely clear what the evidence is showing and it differs if it's a research article or if it's a commentary.

So I think that's the other thing that our reviewers most often get confused about, what venue in the journal this manuscript is intended for, because the standards and expectations about scientific rigor, precision of thinking, well, we like everything to be precisely reasoned and expressed, but sometimes the opinions are fine in a commentary, but you might want to keep them out of a research report, so I think it's important for reviewers to be aware of to what part of the journal a particular contribution is directed.

Lisa Dixon:

Yeah, so let me just pick up on that since it's been discussed a bit. So in Psychiatric Services we have a number of different types of articles. We have sort of regular research articles and brief reports which tend to be research oriented. There are reviews, systematic reviews, and otherwise. There are viewpoints. There's a scholarly commentary that we call an Open Forum. We also have a series of specific dedicated columns which focus on particular topic areas.

And so I hope you can glean from the range of even the titles of these types of articles, that the review criteria for a research report is going to differ from a column on state policy or from a viewpoint. One of the things that I think is challenging for reviewers is to say, "Okay, wait, what am I reviewing for? Am I reviewing a research article? Is this really more of a scholarly essay?" I actually think we can do a better job, I can do a better job at the Journal, making sure that the reviewers know the type of article they're reviewing

Alison Cuellar:

In terms of the major comments, it's looking for the major strengths or flaws. What are they and why do they impact your assessment of the overall paper and your recommendation to the editor? And you're not reiterating your recommendation to the editor in the document that goes to the author, so that's not where you put, I recommended a major revision to this paper for the following reasons. That recommendation doesn't have a place in the communication to the author. That was a dialogue between you and the editor. And again, the editor has lots of other things they have to consider, so my role is to provide comments on this manuscript and its overall strengths and weaknesses and novelty, but not to weigh in on should the journal publish it. That's why we have editors.

Howard Goldman :

But I think it's important for the reviewer to recognize that they may have an opinion about it and that they should argue their case clearly, so that the editor can come to what the reviewer considers a thoughtful and appropriate decision.

Alison Cuellar:

I think that's a really great point. If I'm saying that indicating that their major revisions are required or I've said that to the editor, I need to have indicated clearly what those major revisions were, that the ones that troubled me the most, or were there major presentational problems and that kind of thing.

Howard Goldman :

Absolutely, it's not helpful. I didn't find it helpful to me as a reviewer, to have all judgment and no direction. Sometimes you get reviews that are very critical, and then a revision is what's recommended, but they haven't provided with any guidelines for how that revision should take place.

Now sometimes the editor has to do that and we'll hear from Lisa about that in a moment, but that's the trickiest part of being the editor and it's most helpful if the reviewer has assisted with that by explaining what revisions would be important to make.

Lisa Dixon:

And I would just say this. I think some of this is aspirational. You want to do the best possible review, but we don't want to let the perfect be the enemy of the good and you do your best, given what your own

constraints and limitations are, and I think approaching the whole process, again with respect and enthusiasm in my view, goes a long way.

Howard Goldman :

And I suppose in terms of encouraging people to review, don't let your feeling that you can't contribute the perfect, lead you to decline the invitation to review. Because if you really only have time to address one important part that's most in line with your area of expertise, you're doing a really big favor both to the editor and to ultimately to the author by contributing that part. Because we can always ask for a statistical review from an additional reviewer. We try not to have too many reviews and delay the process, but please volunteer to review your expertise, more often than you think you have the capacity to do a totally complete review.

Lisa Dixon:

And actually that reminds me of another really important point, which is that in the era, in the online era, there's an unlimited amount of space for material that's supplemental, that's only found online.

So if there's some table, or some material that maybe isn't critical for the core article, but which might be useful to the reader that wants to dig deeper, we can include that material as supplemental material and it's really not limited. So that I think, really potentially enriches what can be provided to the interested reader. And so that becomes another issue for say, looking at tables and figures, well maybe they could be supplemental.

Alison Cuellar:

And that's another place where the reviewer and the author can dialogue, where the reviewers have a tendency to ask for more information, more information, and the author is up against the word limit and having to face choices. If I expand on this explanation, I have to shorten another one. And then the outcome of which could be putting some of this possibly in a supplemental appendix.

Again, that's going to be sort of a three-way conversation with the editor of what appropriately belongs there and how long that document can be, all to say that this really is a dialogue back and forth. We're trying to help the readers understanding what pieces are important for that.

Howard Goldman :

Thanks very much, Alison. That was a very helpful overview of the whole process. Why don't we shift gears and get the editor's perspective now from Lisa.

Lisa Dixon:

I'm going to walk you through the steps from the submission of an article through its review process. And the first decision that is made, unless I'm in conflict I will make is, does this article get sent out for review at all? Our reviewer resources are very precious. We're asking people to volunteer their time, so I only want to send articles out for review that I think have a legitimate reasonable chance of getting into the Journal and so as I've already said, I have to think about the type of article that it is. Is it a research report? Is it... If it's a column, then it will actually right to the column editors. And I ask myself, "Is this in scope for the journal?

Our journal, this journal is about psychiatric services delivery. There are some absolutely wonderful, fantastic papers that have been submitted to us, but they don't really have much to do with psychiatric services and a substantial number of articles do get sent back be just because they're not in scope. And I

have, the editor has a lot of latitude in that space, and Howard and I talked about this when I took over because the journal has a pretty big presence in the stigma space, and that was something that Howard was deeply interested in, even if some of the articles didn't have a lot of relevance for psychiatric services per se.

But one way to figure out whether an article that you're submitting is in scope, is to see if you can find something sort of similar that looks maybe as a related topic, or where your article... Well if this article's in scope, then maybe my article's in scope. So as a submitter, that's how you might want to think about it. So, I have to ask whether it's in scope and then really the overall quality of the paper.

I always ask myself, "What knowledge gap is it filling? What is it telling us? What is this article, whether it's a viewpoint or a research report, what is it telling us that we didn't know before? Or is it?" And it doesn't have to be new knowledge per se, it could be being said in a different way or from a different perspective, but I want to see something original. And so that's why I say what knowledge gap is it filling?

And then you know, ask yourself questions. What's the internal validity? What's the external validity? How does it, sort of particularly for the research reports, how does it shake out as a scientific offering?

Okay, so let's just say that it's going to go out for review. All right, and Howard alluded to something earlier that I'll comment on right here. Sometimes, I can't make up my mind. I don't know. I don't have the knowledge. Maybe it's in an area that is not my great comfort zone. So what I do sometimes, and I've again learned from my predecessors, is I might identify somebody on the editorial board, who I know really is an expert in this space, and I'll say, "What do you think?" I'll send them the paper and I'll say, "Should this go out for review? Is this original enough? Is this new enough? Is this in scope?" And I'll get it, a second opinion on that question, so that that's something that I do and I think other editors do as well.

If it is being reviewed, then the next challenge is to select the reviewers. And again, from where I sit, I'm looking for diversity. I'm looking for people who can bring different domains of knowledge and experience to the task, and I really can hardly think of a single article where it's uni-dimensional. That's kind of the big picture.

And then there are different sort of tools that the editor has at their disposal. Authors nominate reviewers and I think that's very important. Sometimes authors don't, but I do pay attention to when authors nominate reviewers. We get suggestions from publons, which I think sort of tracks the literature and looks at what types of subject areas different authors have published in. Then the Journal itself has almost a library of reviewers. And when you as a reviewer enter your information into the database, you put your areas of expertise.

So I will frequently check on what reviewers are in our system, who have certain areas of expertise that are relevant for the paper. I will also sometimes look at the reference list in the article, to see what papers are being cited, and who the authors of those papers are.

I also keep several lists of people who have been recommended as reviewers. So for example, people with lived experience or early career folks, I try to, if there's an article that I really want someone with lived experience to review, then I have different resources that will allow me to identify such a person and offer them the opportunity to review.

It may be of some interest to know that some journals do track reviewers performance or the quality of the review. I actually do not do that, but that is something that certain editors do. And if an editor thinks a reviewer has done a really good job, they may come back to that reviewer in our system. We can know when a person last reviewed, so I try not to pile on. If someone just did a review 10 days ago, it's like, well, maybe I shouldn't ask them again.

Overall, I'm looking in general for three reviewers; three separate independent reviewers. Sometimes I get more. Sometimes I get fewer, although I really try to not make a decision without three reviewers. And to be honest with you, that can sometimes require 10 people being invited or 15 people being invited. It really, it depends on the level of interest and how busy people are, but as an editor you have to have perseverance in obtaining the requisite number of reviews.

And I would just say a couple of things. I really, really appreciate detail; big picture, little picture. I know I feel like we're asking people to give of their time. I don't really want you to spend a lot of time on grammar, but if you really want to, go right ahead. I'm not saying I would recommend it, but people get different types of enjoyment from different kinds of processes and sometimes the grammar can really detract from understanding and that's, in those kind of situations, you do want to comment on language.

It can take again a week or sometimes several months to get the requisite number of reviews. Then the next step is evaluating the reviews you that you've received. So, that's the next job of the editor. I would say it's very, very, very rare that an article is accepted without at least one round of revision, so there's almost always this cycle and sometimes it can go up to four or five rounds.

Once the reviews are in, the editor evaluates the reviews. Are they reasonable? Do they make sense? Are they internally consistent? Are the different reviews consistent with each other? Or do they conflict with each other? That happens sometimes. What the editor has to do, and I think this is really quite challenging, is to try to craft a response to the authors that will help the authors navigate the response to the review, assuming that that's what the editor wants to do. So the editor's going to have to decide first, are they going to invite a revision? And if so, how to help the authors navigate the, almost universal diversity of opinion, that will be offered in the reviews.

Howard Goldman :

Lisa, let me ask you a question.

Lisa Dixon:

Sure.

Howard Goldman :

About that. Do you ever include comments from what Alison characterized as the first communication, which is to you as the editor, that were not intended by the reviewer as comments for the author?

Lisa Dixon:

I would say that that would happen if I as editor, can own those comments.

Howard Goldman :

So you sometimes. Do you ever ask the reviewer for permission to do?

Lisa Dixon:

I've not done that, but that's an interesting idea.

Howard Goldman :

On occasion, I felt that those communications were intended for me and that I might want to ask permission, particularly if I thought that they might divulge in an unconscious way, who the reviewer was. Yeah, I didn't always do that, but sometimes I find that the most useful comments to share with the author actually were not intended for the author.

Lisa Dixon:

Yeah, well, and I think that the job of the editor is to try to work with the authors to get the best possible paper, that will contribute to the mission of the journal, and the mission of the work.

One of the things that I've learned, a lesson that I've learned is, sometimes I think there is just no way that the authors are going to be able to address these comments and I just say, "Well, let's give them a chance." Okay? Let's give them a chance. And you know what? It's amazing to me how authors can be creative. How they can reshape their thinking.

And so I've actually moved much more in the direction of offering the opportunity to revise to authors, even if I can't see a way forward because it's their work and let them take a shot at it.

Howard Goldman :

Yeah, that's not something we ever discussed, but I did that all the time. I still do that with papers. I think there's an overview of editing broader than our Journal that I'd like to share at this point and that is, I don't know whether people really understand that some editors edit journals, I call it, out of their back pocket. They don't really have a lot of time, even maybe sometimes less time than is really required to do a decent job of being the editor. And there are some journals that have full-time editors-in-chief that are paid and that's their full-time job. And the expectations vary from those that are doing it out of their back pocket and don't have very much time to take on this important responsibility but still they choose to do that.

Journal editors at APA journals are pretty well compensated for the time and we view it as an important communication, but we're not full-time editors, the way a few journals have full-time editors.

Lisa Dixon:

We're like weekend editors, like Saturday and Sunday.

Howard Goldman :

And weekends. Nights and weekends.

Alison Cuellar:

We get to get two questions and I want to be sure we hit on them. And one was, how do I get credit for being a peer reviewer?

For some journals you can get CME kind of credit. You can put it certainly on your resume if you're in the academic space. You can then have that review documented. It is something that is an activity and a skillset that can be part of your resume.

Howard Goldman :

Well, historically, just self-attestation has been satisfactory for the most part, for scholarly and business related resumes.

Lisa Dixon:

How do I get credit? Well, the first way that you get credit is that's something that you can say on your CV. You're a reviewer for a particular journal. I think you can also try to sign up for the registries for different journals, in terms of, for example, Psych Services. If you want to become a reviewer for Psych Services, you for example, might want to email me and send me your CV and volunteer.

I believe that there are, with other journals, there may be some different methods. For example, obtaining continuing education credits or getting put on a roster, but perhaps that's something that we can obtain more information about in a future podcast.

Alison Cuellar:

Some reviewers want to know how they can become reviewers and you identified how you find reviewers. It's also completely appropriate to approach members of the editorial board, for example, of Psychiatric Services, to say that you're available and to describe what your expertise is and then to see what happens from there.

Lisa Dixon:

And I think Alison, I would really encourage, I mean part of what stimulated this podcast in the first place is, it's very important for people from underrepresented communities, minoritized communities to participate. I want to make sure that Psychiatric Services has an open door to people who may not have had the opportunities to be invited to review, as a result of their previous educational and clinical and research experiences.

So, I want to enrich our reviewer base with people who bring different experiences, different knowledge, different backgrounds, to the process.

Howard Goldman :

Mentors can invite junior people to help them with reviews to get some experience, and then they become known to journals.

Lisa Dixon:

Absolutely.

Howard Goldman :

And junior people can approach people that supervise them or their mentors and ask them for that opportunity.

Alison Cuellar:

Another question we've gotten is, how do I manage multiple review requests? What do I do if I don't feel comfortable conducting the review?

And so I believe the most professional way to approach that is if you don't have the time, you don't feel you have the expertise, is to immediately let the editor know, and then wherever possible, provide suggestions for alternative reviewers who have similar expertise to your own.

Now you don't know if they're available, but you cer certainly give the editor a headstart by providing some names.

Howard Goldman :

Yeah, that's very helpful. But if you can't think of somebody, it's better not to just leave the journal hanging before you decide whether you agree or you don't agree.

Lisa Dixon:

It's okay to say no.

Howard Goldman :

Yeah, exactly. It's okay to say no. It's okay to ask for more time.

Alison Cuellar:

If you feel like your plate is too full, the best thing then is to decline. Of course, we're always hopeful that you'll say, "Yes" to Psychiatric Services and "no" to another journal, but if you don't have the time, then it's best not to delay the process for the authors and for the editor. And again, suggesting those alternatives.

Lisa Dixon:

I was going to finish with just a few challenges that I see, that I think editors experience, and we've sort of alluded to several of them, but we will maybe repeat a little bit here.

So a challenge is what is written to the authors doesn't really correlate with what is written to the editor. That whole, sort of the value of explaining in some ways, teaching, providing the rationale. We expect the authors to do that and I think in a certain respect, we as reviewers owe that to the authors. If you're going to make a point, try to justify it and do it.

And another challenge is when the review is hostile or rude. That's very unfortunate. I'm sure in my career I've probably done some hostile type reviews, but I would really encourage reviewers just to be as respectful and thoughtful as possible. When I do get a hostile or rude review, sometimes I will edit it and try to edit out some of the language that I feel is just not helpful.

Another challenge for me in our journal, which has all these different article types, is that the review is treating the article as if it's say a research report when it's really more of a scholarly essay. That I feel is something that we have to do a better job making sure that the reviewers understand what we're expecting from an article and as a reviewer, look for that.

Sometimes, I actually have to pick up the phone, which I actually kind of like doing, talking to authors, if we're going back and forth and I'm not being clear enough. That does happen from time to time. It's like, "Can we just chat on the phone?" And sometimes that really can fast track things.

I think another challenge is how directive to be with authors. I try to give the authors as much latitude as I think is reasonable and give the authors the opportunity to challenge the reviewers a little bit. Again, that's in the spirit of scholarly dialogue.

And the last challenge that I wanted to just mention is kind of in the spirit of be being able to say, "no" if you feel like you can't do the review. Because if the reviews take months and months to do it, I feel like it's kind of not fair to the authors and this happens. I mean, we all forget or you end up, something gets in the way and you can't do the review. And we do track and monitor that and if someone is just seems unable to do the review, I will generally invite more reviewers to see if we can get our requisite number of three.

But again, I would just encourage folks, as reviewers, to not expect themselves to be perfect and if you realize you've accepted it to do a review and then you realize you can't just fire off an email and say, "I'm really sorry, but can't do this one."

My last comment on this would just be, again, to remind us all how reliant this whole process is on review and that it amazes me as an author, how much better my papers are after they've gone through review and that's really what we're trying to do here.

Howard Goldman :

Yeah, I agree. It's an impressive process to watch, to participate in, and creating a community of this kind of exchange where people can be constructively critical of an article and help it to become better and an appreciative author that responds and makes the paper better. It's very gratifying as an editor and as a part of that community.

I always say the most important thing about being a good author and being a good reviewer is also being a good reader of the journals, whose community you're a part of.

Alison Cuellar:

I agree. When I get that email from the journal and I can tell they're asking me to conduct a review, on the one hand I think, "Oh, I do have a lot to do." And on the other hand, I'm really excited to look and see what the title and description of that article is. What has an author out there produced? And I approach it with curiosity and I really enjoy that.

Howard Goldman :

I think our audience can see why the journal has been so successful, as great members of the editorial staff and a great editor-in-chief, and we want to thank Alison Cuellar and Lisa Dixon today, for this special [inaudible 00:44:40] services podcast on reviewing.

Lisa Dixon:

Thank you so much, Howard. Thank you, Alison. And I think this is going to have a chapter two. Thank you.

Howard Goldman :

Have a good day.

Alison Cuellar:

Thank you both. Bye-Bye.