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Submitting Manuscripts but Not for Publication? Black Sheep Authors in Publishing.

Karsten Wiechert

Jens R Chapman
Swedish Neuroscience Institute

Jeffrey C Wang

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Submitting Manuscripts but Not for Publication? Black Sheep Authors in Publishing

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2020 was a fantastic year for this Journal with our inaugural impact factor being defined and our acceptance into Clarivates' Science Citation Index. At 2.683 it is right among the top ranking Journals, being by far the highest of any spine journal with an open access model.

One essential pillar of this tremendous success is our rigorous peer review system. Our reviewers are among the world's top experts in their field. Their reviews are the basis for the editorial decision of each and every manuscript to be rejected or published in *Global Spine Journal*.

The Impact Factor has, as expected, triggered a significant increase of submissions into our manuscript review process. The vastly increased number of manuscripts has multiple reasons, one being the fact that researchers in their PhD-process have to fulfill university regulations to publish in Journals listed on the Science Citation index only. To ensure the high quality of abstracts, the review process has not been altered. In several steps, all manuscripts are anonymized, checked and re-checked for a number of technical aspects. They are subsequently reviewed in at least 2 steps by spine specialists from around the globe with specific expertise in the specific topic. The review process results in recommendations by the reviewers, the Deputy Editors and the Editors in Chief who all have read each manuscript carefully and diligently. The most frequent recommendation is a revision of the manuscript, either minor or major. Manuscripts which are accepted for publication without any changes are quite rare, somewhat more frequent are manuscripts which are rejected due to various reasons unsolvable at this point.

The decision to revise a manuscript is based on a thorough review and our reviewers usually make quite detailed proposals about what should be changed in the original submission. The reviewers are expected to review the assigned work with a critical note and professional, transparent distance as well as a positive attitude about what is missing, what could be improved and what they feel is needed for publication in GSI.

It is exactly this information that can turn out to be a double edged sword. Some authors deliberately submit their

work into the review process knowing that chances of publication in the current form are extremely low. Therefore they decide to retract their manuscript from publication in *GSJ* following the peer review process. All the valuable information on how to improve the scientific value and the quality of the manuscript is used and the changed manuscript is submitted elsewhere. While this process is widespread, it is a slap in the face for the reviewers work as well as for the Journal and its review process. While the overwhelming majority of our authors show an honest and professional interest in publishing with *GSJ*, we are not immune to these black sheep authors trying to tweak the system for their own personal advantage.

The legal opportunities to counter those activities are very limited. Journals and publishers do try to tackle this problem while at the same time are trying to attract high quality submissions and provide serious authors with a positive, professional and high quality publishing experience. Charging a review fee is one way some journals react, flagging those authors and institutions and to take appropriate measures in case of future submissions another.

The editorial team of *Global Spine Journal* has adapted its review- and screening process for these manuscripts years ago and will continue to take every measure necessary to ensure that this practice is not taking advantage of our peer review system and that the Journal keeps the submission of excellent manuscripts into our review and publication process the utmost priority.

Karsten Wiechert, MD

*Schön-Klinik München Harlaching, Academic Hospital,
Paracelsus Medical University Salzburg, Munich, Germany*

Jens R. Chapman, MD

*Swedish Neuroscience Institute, Swedish Medical Center,
Seattle, WA, USA*

Jeffrey C. Wang, MD

USC Spine Center, Los Angeles, CA, USA

