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Peer reviewed

Peer Review at the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*—An Appeal to the Better Angels of Our Nature

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A senior colleague and major advocate for the field of geriatric mental health research recently wrote to us: “It goes without saying that all of us expect excellent reviews of work we submit for publication.” What prompted his communication to the editors was his recent experience as a triage editor for the review of a manuscript from one of the world’s centers of excellence in geriatric psychiatry: He issued 15 invitations to potential reviewers, of whom 6 accepted, 8 refused, and one did not respond. We share his dismay at the unacceptably high refusal rate. Sadly, his experience is not atypical.

As editors of the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* (AMGP), we are concerned that some colleagues take the attitude that invitations to review manuscripts are burdensome, even optional, and therefore easily dismissed. We are thus making an appeal to our joint responsibilities as citizens, scientists, and clinicians. Aside from the obligations of scientific citizenship, in which reviewing manuscripts is a core component, other reasons for embracing peer review include opportunities for learning what is at the cutting edge of innovation, using review as a teaching and mentoring tool (with permission and attribution), and assisting others as well as learning ourselves to improve the stylistic and communication effectiveness of scientific writing, reporting, and communication.

We are fully aware of the time and effort needed to write a good review of a manuscript. We also realize

that busy scientists regularly receive requests for reviews from various journals. Some of us receive multiple such requests on a daily basis, partly as a result of an increase in the number of online journals as well as international journals in very specific areas. It is not possible for most scientists to honor all the requests received. We suggest the following for your consideration:

- (1) The AJGP is the flagship journal of the AAGP and has been the highest ranked journal in our field for many years. If you ever published a paper in the AJGP or are planning to submit one to this journal, you will agree with the need for a constructive review from an expert in the field. We hope you will prioritize the AJGP in selecting reviewer assignments.
- (2) The AAGP offers CME credits for the time spent reviewing a manuscript for the AJGP.
- (3) A review can be an excellent mentoring opportunity. With the editor’s approval, you may choose a younger colleague to review the article with your feedback. That colleague could receive the credit for the review, which could help their CV and academic progress.
- (4) If you absolutely cannot review a paper, please inform the journal quickly and recommend alternative reviewers, if possible, within your own department, and encourage them to accept the invitation when they receive it.

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Peer Review at AJGP

The world of scientific publication is rapidly evolving and as such entails many policy and ethical issues. At the heart of our shared life as a community of geriatric mental health researchers and clinicians is the robustness of peer review. The quality of our science, its benefits to our patients, and its relevance to health

policy are critically dependent upon the service and wisdom of peer reviewers.

Thank you for all that you do to ensure the vitality of peer review at the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*. The journal is a team effort, and we are grateful for your support.