Peer review

Peer review alternatives and future

Pritpal S Tamber

Editorial Director of Medicine, *BioMed Central*
www.biomedcentral.com

Director, *World Association of Medical Editors (WAME)*
www.wame.org

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Peer review alternatives and the future, Pritpal S Tamber, BioMed Central
What I am going to cover

1: The problem
2: Tinker with what we have
3: Solutions from the online world?
4: Starting from scratch?
The problems with peer review

- Slow
- Expensive
- Subjective
- Open to abuse
- Poor at detecting faults, fraud or misconduct

So why do we bother?
Why do we bother?

Because there are some good things:

- *Might* be educational for author, reviewer and editor
- *Might* stop poor science being published
- *Might* improve articles
- *Might* help to select the better articles
- *Might* detect faults, fraud and misconduct
- Will get me a trip to India

And it’s all we’ve got!
Tinkering with what we have

- Treat reviewers better
  - Keep them informed of decisions
  - Pay them?
- Create more checklists (CONSORT)
- Train authors, reviewers and editors
- Open review?
- **Peer review: superficially, it’s deep; but deep down, it’s superficial**
Solutions from the online world?

- E-print / pre-print servers? (arXiv.org)
  - Post article
  - Collect feedback
  - Revise and send to journal
  - *But who will do it?*

- Pre-publication history?
  - An extension of open peer review?

- **But can peer review really “save” a piece of research?**
Starting from scratch?

If you were starting from scratch you’d consider:

- What do I review, the article or protocol?
- When do I review science, before it’s started or after it’s finished? “IM” before, “RAD” after?
- Who should be reviewing, trained or untrained reviewers? Methodologists first, specialists after?
- And who’s monitoring the whole thing?

If you were starting from scratch you wouldn’t design what we have ...
So how do we move on?

- Change hurts
- Need to recognise and reward skills:
  - Train, appraise, and re-train reviewers
  - Train, appraise, and re-train editors
  - Everyone should be accountable
- Reward both with academic kudos
What I have covered

1: Reiterated the problem
2: Suggested some possible tinkering
3: Suggested some online solutions
4: How we could start from scratch

Thank you for listening