



## EDITORIAL

## Open letter to our reviewers: Justice is needed!

## Carta aberta aos revisores: Justiça precisa-se!



Dear Reviewer,

The peer-review process is the gold standard for scientific communication, and despite some weaknesses and disadvantages, it is now and will remain an important pillar of most scientific publications. As part of the process of screening of submitted articles, the peer-review system helps to improve the quality of publications, and indirectly the journal's impact factor.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, in the Portuguese Journal of Cardiology (*Revista Portuguesa de Cardiologia*, RPC), the peer-review system is at the heart of the acceptance process. We rely on reviewers to ensure that research findings are reliable and relevant before they are communicated to the world. However, to be effective, the process requires rapid handling of the large number of articles received, without compromising the quality of the reviews.

Peer review is a voluntary and ethical contribution. This is why good reviewers are difficult to find: they have to review submissions both rapidly and thoroughly, a hard task for someone who is often overwhelmed with clinical care practice and usually unpaid for their reviews.

Reviewing is both a privilege and a responsibility. Being asked to participate in a review process should be considered an honor, as it reflects one's peers' acknowledgment of expertise in a specific area, even though completing a review is often time-consuming and laborious.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, peer review is thought of as a 'culture of service' to the profession, a work of scientific citizenship. As such, repeated invitations to review should be the main incentive for the best reviewers.

It is clear that reviewers need to be encouraged if we want to avoid 'reviewer fatigue', as manifested by successive refusals from overwhelmed reviewers receiving excessive invitations without reward. Accordingly, we are aware that identifying the best reviewers – their reward for their hard work – is more than fair and justice is needed for them.

Should reviewers be rewarded? It is increasingly challenging for all journal editors to find peer reviewers. Top medical journals, such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, set a good example by granting continuing medical education (CME) credits, which can be claimed by US-based reviewers for specific hours of contribution or a specific number of high-quality and timely reviews.<sup>3</sup>

There is considerable discussion about the importance and effect of rewards (monetary or otherwise) in the peer-review process.<sup>1</sup> Rewarding reviewers has been proposed as an incentive for peer review, and several journals have begun offering different kinds of rewards, particularly non-monetary incentives.<sup>4</sup> Experienced reviewers are not an endangered species, but they may be unmotivated and overloaded. As stated above, appreciation for such an invaluable effort should be properly demonstrated, and we argue strongly that rewarding reviewers for their hard work is absolutely fair, and justice is essential. In our opinion, it is time that reviewers were appropriately recognized for their important contribution to the progress of research.

Inclusion in the journal's annual list of reviewers, typically in the first or last issue of the year, is the most common form of recognition, but our reviewers deserve much more. Accordingly, at the suggestion of our Editorial Board and with the support of the Executive Board of the Portuguese Society of Cardiology (*Sociedade Portuguesa de Cardiologia*, SPC), we have identified and developed various incentives for our reviewers, summarized below.

Additionally, we list useful support tools for the RPC's reviewers, editors and authors, as survival kits to help them succeed.

## Incentives and rewards for our reviewers

1. Public recognition of best reviewer status: publication of a list of the best reviewers in the RPC and in its

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**Table 1** Elsevier Editorial Systems training services: email addresses and links.

Support for reviewers and editors		
1. Digital call center (support and help for reviewers and editors with specific questions concerning the Editorial Manager; in Portuguese, English or Spanish; request by email; answer by email or phone)	<a href="mailto:spanish-support@elsevier.com">spanish-support@elsevier.com</a>	
2. One-to-one online personalized teaching sessions on Editorial Manager	<a href="https://elsevier.fullslate.com/services/5154">https://elsevier.fullslate.com/services/5154</a> <a href="https://elsevier.fullslate.com/services/5184?employee=5786">https://elsevier.fullslate.com/services/5184?employee=5786</a>	in English In Portuguese; Ms. Elisabete Alvarez, Portuguese speaker, selected by default
3. Digital guide to Editorial Manager	<a href="https://service.elsevier.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/28527/supporthub/publishing/">https://service.elsevier.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/28527/supporthub/publishing/</a>	
4. Tutorials on Editorial Manager (pdf)	<a href="https://www.ariessys.com/wp-content/uploads/EM-Reviewer-English.pdf">https://www.ariessys.com/wp-content/uploads/EM-Reviewer-English.pdf</a> <a href="https://www.ariessys.com/wp-content/uploads/EM-Editor-English.pdf">https://www.ariessys.com/wp-content/uploads/EM-Editor-English.pdf</a>	Reviewers: Reviewer Tutorial Editors: Editor Tutorial
<i>Support for authors</i>		
1. Instructions for authors	<a href="https://revportcardiol.org/pt-guia-autores">https://revportcardiol.org/pt-guia-autores</a> <a href="https://revportcardiol.org/en-guia-autores">https://revportcardiol.org/en-guia-autores</a> <a href="http://static.elsevier.es/norm_organ/334normas.pdf">http://static.elsevier.es/norm_organ/334normas.pdf</a>	
2. Tutorials on Editorial Manager (pdf)	<a href="https://www.ariessys.com/wp-content/uploads/EM-Author-English.pdf">https://www.ariessys.com/wp-content/uploads/EM-Author-English.pdf</a>	Editorial Manager: Author Tutorial

Portuguese Congress of Cardiology supplements, and reviewer certificates to be awarded and presented at special public sessions of the Congress.

- Registration, travel and accommodation for the European Society of Cardiology Congress for the top three RPC reviewers each year.
- A discount of 50% on the registration fee for SPC events for the top 10 RPC reviewers each year.
- Inclusion of the top 10 reviewers of each year in the pre-submission review of position papers and similar documents published in the RPC by the SPC's working groups and associations, in their area of expertise. As a document reviewer, the reviewer's name will be associated with the corresponding paper in PubMed, with curricular impact.
- One month's free access to Scopus and ScienceDirect, provided by Elsevier.
- Registration of the RPC in online platforms with reviewer recognition. The RPC is now partnered with ReviewerCredits and the Reviewer Recognition Platform. Through these partnerships, every RPC review will be automatically added to the reviewer's profile on the respective platform. Reviewers should go to the relevant site, find the RPC's profile, and register and build their individual profile on the RPC's page.

The common feature of these platforms is the acknowledgment that peer review is an important service for the scientific community and a demanding task that requires time and competence. They therefore set out

to counter the lack of recognition accorded to reviewers by certifying, evaluating and rewarding scientists as peer reviewers.

(a) ReviewerCredits (<https://www.reviewercredits.com/>): In this platform, a number of credits are assigned for each review. Based on the number of credits earned, the reviewer can obtain various rewards, such as discounts on services provided by ReviewerCredits's partners, on article processing charges in selected journals, and on purchases in the ReviewerCredits store (<https://www.reviewercredits.com/store/>).

(b) Reviewer Recognition Platform (<https://www.reviewerrecognition.elsevier.com/>): This Elsevier platform also provides discounts for reviewers, including discount vouchers for books from the Elsevier Book Store and for author services (English language editing, translation, and illustrations). Additionally, it awards review certificates that can be downloaded and printed for promotion and other benefits.

(c) Publons (<https://publons.com/>): A partnership between the RPC and Publons is still under study, but meanwhile reviewers can register on an individual basis. This platform works with reviewers and publishers to give credit for peer review, helping reviewers to record, verify, and showcase their peer review contributions for use in promotion applications, etc. Reviewers receive recognition even if the reviews are anonymous and the manuscript is never published. Publons is also linked with other major research sites such as Web of Science and ORCID that host platforms to enable recognition of reviewing/editing

activities and provide various metrics such as top reviewer in selected fields.

A 'survival kit' for the RPC's reviewers, editors and authors with useful email addresses and links to Elsevier Editorial Systems training services is provided in [Table 1](#).

## Conclusion

So, dear reviewer, we know that your peer reviews play a pivotal role in improving the quality of our journal. We also know that your work and efforts should be rewarded.

We have identified and developed a number of rewards for you that are summarized above. We are aware that the present incentives are still insufficient and far from ideal, but they represent a real effort and a first step toward achieving our goal. We hope that in combination, these incentives will be useful and will help you to become more involved and committed to producing timely and high-quality evaluations of manuscripts submitted to our journal.

## References

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