

## Peer-review process critical, say journal editors

The peer-review process prior to journal publication of an economic study is a "*critical piece of quality control*", said editor of *PharmacoEconomics* Mr Christopher Carswell at an issues panel held at the 7th Annual European Congress of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research [*Hamburg, Germany; Oct 2004*].

While the process of peer reviewing submitted manuscripts of study results is "*not perfect*", it is an essential step and "*requires the participation of everyone*" – namely authors, peer reviewers and editors, commented Mr Carswell. He also outlined key points associated with the peer-review process, and noted that to ensure a thorough review, peer reviewers should only agree to review a manuscript if they have sufficient time. By the same token, the peer-review process needs to be performed in a timely manner, but not at the expense of making "*erroneous or unwise decisions*", stressed Mr Carswell.

In addition to outlining criteria which make for a good research paper, in the same issues panel the editor of *Value in Health* Dr Josephine Mauskopf commented that the peer-review process makes such papers "*much, much better than the original*". She also noted that she has always been "*grateful*" for any peer reviews, as they assist in the selection process for journal publication.

The issues panel, which included the editor of *Clinical Therapeutics* Mr Alan Lyles, also fielded questions on whether the peer-review process should be double-blind, and on how editors can help to ensure the process remains fair for authors submitting their work. Mr Carswell noted that there is a "*lack of evidence*" to assess whether single-blind or double-blind peer reviews are superior. However, he also said he prefers a single-blind process so that the peer reviewer does not feel pressured. Mr Lyles pointed out that there is a database of peer reviewers which helps to keep track of which reviewers produce fair reviews. Dr Mauskopf also commented that the co-editor may make final decisions regarding manuscripts, or if in doubt over the quality of the peer review, may find another reviewer.