Instructions to Reviewers

Deciding Whether to Review a Manuscript

Conflict of Interest. Reviewers should not accept to review a manuscript if a conflict of interest exists per the AHA Conflict of Interest Policy (reviewer section begins on the bottom of page 4).

Examples of typical conflicts of interest are:

1. The reviewer has an ownership interest in a company that stands to benefit from the results reported in the manuscript.
2. The reviewer is currently collaborating with the author or has recently collaborated with the author (i.e. within the past 5 years).
3. The reviewer feels he or she cannot give an impartial and objective review, free from professional or personal bias.

If you have questions regarding a potential conflict of interest, please contact the handling editor, and he/she will decide whether it is appropriate to review the manuscript.

Time. Please consider whether you can complete the review within 10 days. Also, after agreeing to complete a review, if unforeseen circumstances prevent the reviewer from completing within the allotted time, please contact the editor immediately.

Peer Review Process

If you realize that a conflict of interest exists after the review process begins, please notify the handling editor immediately.

Ethical Responsibilities During the Review Process

1. **Confidentiality** - The reviewer should maintain confidentiality about the existence and substance of the manuscript. It is inappropriate to share the manuscript or to discuss it in detail with others before publication. There are some exceptions, if approved by the editor. One example is that the reviewer may ask a colleague to collaborate on a review. However, your collaborator on the review should also agree to maintain confidentiality, and the editor should be informed of the participation of this additional person.

2. **Reviewer Conduct** - As stated in the Uniform Requirements (http://www.icmje.org/#peer), "Reviewers must not publicly discuss authors' work and must not appropriate authors' ideas before the manuscript is published. Reviewers must not retain the manuscript for their personal use and should destroy copies of manuscripts after submitting their reviews." Knowledge of the content of confidential manuscripts should not be used for any other purpose unrelated to the reviewing of the manuscript.

3. **Reporting Concerns** - The reviewer also has the responsibility of noting any ethical concerns, not limited to but including suspected duplicate publication, fraud, plagiarism, or ethical concerns about the use of animals or humans in the research being reported.

Constructing a Review

Please be sure to review all files associated with the manuscript including any online supplement files and related files.

1. **Rating a manuscript** - In this section of the review form, the reviewer ranks the 1) Novelty/Originality, 2) Scientific Importance/Impact, 3) Adequacy of Methods/Experimental Design, 4) Quality of Data/Presentation Results, and 5) Overall Scientific Priority of the manuscript based on the following scale:

   Top 10 % = High Priority
   Top 20% = Somewhat High Priority
   Top 30% = Average Priority
   Upper 50% = Somewhat Low Priority
   Lower 50% = Low Priority
   N/A = Does not apply to this paper

   Manuscripts rated in the upper 20% are more likely to be accepted for publication. The reviewer also makes a recommendation for publication.

   Indicate whether you have any concerns regarding the statistical analysis used or if there are any ethical considerations.

2. **In confidential comments to the Editor** - Summarize your reasons for your rating and recommendations. Provide specific comments regarding the original aspects of the work and its importance.

3. **In comments to the Author** - The comments to the author should not include any statements that indicate to the author your judgment as to the acceptability of the paper for publication. All comments should be stated in a constructive and helpful way. The reviewer should discuss the shortcomings and/or strengths of a study. Include in your critique your judgment of 1) originality and scientific importance, 2) adequacy and length of the title, 3) adequacy of the abstract, 4) introduction, rationale and clarity of hypothesis, 5) adequacy of experimental design and methods, 6) quality of data and presentation of results, including figures, 7) appropriateness of the authors' interpretation of their data, 8) length and appropriateness of the discussion, and 9) inclusion of recent and appropriate references. If possible, make specific recommendations for revisions.