

EDITORIAL

Peer Review Week 2021

As this issue comes to press, the scientific community has just successfully celebrated Peer Review Week on September 20–24, 2021 (<https://peerreviewweek.wordpress.com/>). This is an annual event organized since 2016 that highlights the important role of peer review as a mechanism for quality assurance in science and research. The theme for this year's event is "Identity in Peer Review", which points to the critical interplay, and intersection, between personal, professional, and social identities and how these affect the ways in which the peer review process takes place. This year's theme also enjoins us to reflect on current practices, strive to reduce inequities, and ensure multivoicedness in the peer review process.

Peer reviewers are part of the wider ecosystem of the scientific publication community and their efforts aid in the timely production of journal issues. Peer reviewers generously contribute their time and effort to critically assess submitted manuscripts, offer comments and suggestions on how to improve papers, and aid the Editor in arriving at a fair decision on the publication of these scholarly outputs. Since the work is voluntary and *pro bono*, the peer review system relies on a researcher's sense of altruism (i.e., review as a contribution to the scientific community), although more recently, some organizations started providing recognition (e.g., Publons.com), or have included peer review work as part of their merit system (e.g., for promotion, maintenance of credentials).

Per journal policy, all submitted manuscripts submitted for consideration in the *Philippine Journal of Health Research and Development* are evaluated by at least two reviewers with expertise in the topic or method presented in the paper. A third assessor may be invited, for example, if a reviewer suggests further statistical review of the manuscript, or if the submission editor wishes to consult a third party on divergent points raised by the two reviewers. Submission editors of the *Philippine Journal of Health Research and Development* strive to achieve diversity in the peer review process by inviting reviewers beyond the University of the Philippines Manila, and by consulting both established and emerging experts in the human and natural sciences. As a means of recognition, the journal publishes a Reviewer Acknowledgement page as part of the last issue for the year. We also provide a standard email thanking reviewers for their contribution, which they may use as documentation of their work for the journal.

Sustaining the work of peer review, however, has been challenged by the current pandemic situation. Compared to the pre-pandemic period, more individuals need to be invited before we can secure the required two reviews, and longer turnaround times have been requested for completion of manuscript evaluation (i.e., more than the usual 14 days allocated previously). Most reviewers who beg off from review, or request for extra time in reading through papers, cite the professional or personal burden they are encountering during these difficult times. However, by exercising flexibility in our timelines, and by tapping into our personal and professional networks, the editorial team is able to push forward the work of the *Philippine Journal of Health Research and Development* and publish issues in a timely manner.

The *Philippine Journal of Health Research and Development* joins the scientific community in the celebration of peer review week and warmly dedicates this issue to all peer reviewers.

Carl Abelardo T. Antonio, MD, MPH
Editor-in-Chief

