
Correspondence

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ANONYMOUS PEER REVIEWS?

Is it time for us to question the appropriateness and perhaps even scientific validity of keeping peer reviews anonymous?

As a reviewer and author, I have reservations as to the appropriateness of the current status of anonymous peer review. As a reviewer, my responsibility is first and foremost to fellow scientists, clinicians and the public, who will benefit or be harmed by what is written in peer-reviewed journals. It follows that reviewers should be accountable to those groups and individuals. The current process of maintain-

ing anonymity does not permit such accountability but simply allows it to be assessed at the editorial level. Unfortunately, the expertise may not exist at the editorial level to make an adequate assessment. Indeed, a reviewer may not only have an important bias but may exercise that bias in judgement for or against the acceptability of a paper. Recognizing this possibility, a number of journals have initiated "blind" reviews, in which the authors and institution are not disclosed to the reviewers. However, most experts in the field quickly recognize the source of some of the manuscripts submitted for review, and abundant clues exist

within the manuscripts as to who the authors are. Thus, a blind review is not truly blinded.

I would accept being held responsible for anything I write in a review. Would such accountability threaten, or might it actually enhance, the quality of reviews?

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