

Peer Review Policy

Purpose

The African Journal of Reproductive Health (AJRH) uses peer review to assess the scientific quality, originality, methodological soundness, ethical integrity, relevance, and contribution of manuscripts submitted for publication.

Initial Editorial Assessment

All submitted manuscripts undergo an initial editorial assessment to determine whether they fall within the scope of the journal and meet its basic submission and ethical requirements.

The editors may reject manuscripts at this stage where they are clearly outside the journal's scope, do not meet minimum scholarly or methodological standards, or raise significant ethical or publication-integrity concerns.

Double-Blind Peer Review

AJRH operates a double-blind peer-review process.

Under double-blind peer review:

- the identities of authors are not disclosed to reviewers;
- the identities of reviewers are not disclosed to authors;
- reviewers assess manuscripts independently and objectively;
- authors are required to prepare manuscripts in a manner that supports anonymous review; and
- reviewers must not attempt to identify the authors of manuscripts assigned to them.

Where necessary for editorial assessment, the identities of authors and reviewers may be known to the journal's editorial team but will be kept confidential from the respective parties.

Selection of Reviewers

Manuscripts that pass the initial editorial assessment are sent to appropriately qualified peer reviewers. Reviewers are selected based on relevant subject expertise, methodological competence, and availability.

Reviewer Responsibilities

Reviewers must:

- treat manuscripts as confidential documents;
- provide objective and constructive comments;
- evaluate the manuscript on scholarly and methodological grounds;
- identify important relevant literature where appropriate;
- disclose conflicts of interest;
- decline a review when they do not have sufficient expertise;
- avoid using unpublished information for personal or professional benefit; and
- inform the editor of suspected plagiarism, duplicate publication, fabricated or falsified data, or other serious concerns.

Confidentiality

All manuscripts submitted for peer review must be treated as confidential.

Reviewers must not disclose manuscript contents, discuss the manuscript with unauthorised persons, or use unpublished information obtained through the review process for personal or professional purposes.

Reviewers must also respect the double-blind nature of the review process and should not attempt to identify the authors.

Conflicts of Interest

Reviewers must disclose any relationship or interest that could affect, or reasonably be perceived to affect, the objectivity of their assessment.

A reviewer should decline the assignment where a significant conflict of interest exists, including where the reviewer has a close personal, professional, institutional, or competitive relationship with the authors or their work.

Editors must also manage conflicts of interest appropriately when assigning or assessing manuscripts..

Editorial Decisions

Editorial decisions are based on the overall scholarly assessment of the manuscript and are not determined solely by the recommendation of an individual reviewer.

The editor may seek additional reviews where reviewer assessments substantially conflict or where clarification is required.

Appeals

Authors may appeal an editorial decision where they believe that a substantive error occurred in the assessment or that the journal's procedures were not followed appropriately.

An appeal must provide specific grounds and should not simply restate the manuscript's merits.

Reviewer Misconduct

Concerns regarding reviewer misconduct, including breach of confidentiality, inappropriate use of unpublished information, undisclosed conflicts of interest, abusive comments, or manipulation of the review process, will be investigated by the editorial team.

Appropriate action may include removal from the reviewer pool and referral to an appropriate institution or authority where necessary.

Editorial Records

AJRH will maintain appropriate records of peer-review and editorial decisions in accordance with the journal's administrative and publication procedures.

The journal will periodically review its peer-review procedures to ensure that the double-blind process is applied consistently and supports fairness, confidentiality, and academic integrity.