


To the Editor: Peer-Review Authorship—Embedding Recognition and Reward in the Co-Production of Scholarly Publications

I read the editorial by Simpson and colleagues with great interest.¹ The authors provide welcome recommendations regarding how to better recognize the invaluable contributions of peer reviewers in the co-production of scholarly publications. Notwithstanding its limitations, the peer-review process remains a fundamental tenet of evidence-based medicine; by objectively and rigorously examining the veracity of biomedical research, expert peer reviewers and editors act as custodians of science and guide authors in communicating their research as accurately as possible. The burden of the peer-review process is substantial; a recent analysis estimated that the total time spent on peer reviews in the year 2020 was over 130 million hours, which is approximately 15 000 years.² The same authors calculated crude estimates of the monetary value of this time in the context of the United States, United Kingdom, and China, giving eye-watering values of \$1.5 billion, \$400 million, and \$600 million, respectively.²

I wholeheartedly agree with Simpson and colleagues that the staggering effort of peer reviewers is not adequately recognized or rewarded. The authors make several valuable recommendations for journals, including providing metrics of peer-review frequency and quality, opportunities to publish commentaries alongside accepted articles, publishing details of the highest-performing reviewers, and including reviewers' names in acknowledgements sections. I would go further and suggest that authors of high-quality peer-review reports that make significant contributions to publications should be recognized and rewarded with a distinct form of peer-review authorship within the final publications. Journals could offer to publish peer

reviewers' names directly below those of the authors, both online and in print versions, to indicate the contribution of peer reviewers more clearly. Accrediting formal peer-review authorship in this way is more visible and would generate an additional metric for peer reviewers to record and evidence their contributions. It may even be possible for major bibliographic databases like PubMed to index peer reviewers as collaborators, such that their names are discoverable alongside indexed publications. Clearly, it remains incumbent on editorial teams to ensure only high-quality, influential peer reviews are recognized in this way to help prevent abuse of the system. Developing robust, objective methods to determine peer-review quality and influence is therefore crucial; automation of any aspects of this process, for example using novel reviewer-focused metrics,³ may help to streamline and standardize the process.

In summary, I will be acting on Simpson and colleagues' recommendations for reviewers to enhance my own record keeping of peer-review activity, and I encourage others to do the same. If these types of activities and peer-review metrics become the norm, we may see a cultural shift in how we value and reward the scholarly contributions of peer reviewers.

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