

AUTHOR PERCEPTION OF PEER REVIEW

Authors

Mark Gibson, MD, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City, Utah; **Catherine Y. Spong, MD**, Pregnancy and Perinatology Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland; **Sara Ellis Simonsen, RN, MSPH**, Department of Family and Preventive Medicine, Public Health Program, University of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City, Utah; **Sheryl Martin, Obstetrics & Gynecology**, Salt Lake City, Utah; and **James R. Scott, MD**, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Utah School of Medicine, Salt Lake City, Utah

The objective of this study was to survey authors submitting manuscripts to a leading specialty journal regarding their assessment of editorial review. The study sought factors affecting authors' satisfaction and whether authors rated the journal review processes differently from the commentary provided by different reviewers.

Methods

Participation in an online survey was offered to 445 corresponding authors of research manuscripts submitted consecutively during a 7-month period. All manuscripts received full editorial review. The survey instrument asked authors to rate six aspects of editorial comments from each of two to four reviewers and three aspects of the review process. In addition, the survey queried overall satisfaction and likelihood of submission of future manuscripts based on review experience.

Results

Higher ratings for overall satisfaction with manuscript review were given by authors of accepted compared with rejected manuscripts (98% compared with 80%, $P < .001$). Authors rated processes for submission and review more highly than editorial commentary (88% compared with 69%, $P < .001$), and this difference was greater among authors of rejected manuscripts. The extent to which reviewers focused on important aspects of submitted manuscripts received the lowest ratings from authors. Authors' ratings of reviewers' comments differentiated between reviewers and did not correlate with ratings of reviews by the journal's senior editors.

Conclusion

Author feedback was more favourable among authors of accepted manuscripts, and responses differentiated among aspects of editorial review and reviewers. Author feedback may provide a means for monitoring and improvement of processes for editorial review and reviewer commentary.

For the scientific community at large, the findings suggest that author feedback regarding editorial review can provide information leading to greater accountability among journals, in the quality of their handling of review processes, and an added perspective in evaluation of commentary provided by reviewers. Reviewers might note especially that authors most often find fault with the degree to which reviews address the important or central features of manuscripts they review.

© 2008 by The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Published by Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.