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*Editorial*

**In peer review we trust**

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At the time of writing this article, it is estimated that around 12 million people worldwide have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Daily, we experience varying spikes in the number of victims that fall prey to the pandemic. Families, communities, and their socio-economic contexts have been profoundly impacted in our fight against COVID-19. In an interesting turn of events, the newest victim of the pandemic is an industry to whom we look to help address our current condition. In June 2020, two prestigious scientific journals have been reported to have retracted controversial COVID-19 articles.<sup>1</sup> These following events have cast doubts on the peer review process of scientific journals and questioned its integrity and utility.

Peer review is a process adopted by scientific journals that aim to evaluate the scientific soundness of scholarly articles and evaluate whether it is deemed published to the scientific community. Peer review has been described as a necessary evil, highlighting possibly a negative experience while undergoing its processes. This is not far from home. Conversations with colleagues reveal a variety of amusing anecdotes on the rigorous process they had to endure to publish an article.

The seminal article by Smith<sup>2</sup> provided interesting points on the flaws that gnaw the peer review process. Its bad reputation owes to the fact that the peer review process may seem too time-consuming and resource-consuming,

varied in the outcomes, unable to detect flaws and frauds within the research, and the thankless job of reviewing, among a few. Nevertheless, the scientific journal community is in unison supporting the utility of the peer review process; hence it is upheld to this date. Peer review is an essential and integral approach to improving one's scholarly work.

Over the years, different models of peer review have adopted by various scientific journals and publishers. The variety spans rigorous blinding models (i.e., single, double, triple-blind) to more open options. Addressing the risk of bias in the review process is more for the former compared to the latter. Peer review is essentially a hurdle that researchers should prevail before having their manuscripts published. However, in recent years, the emergence of preprints and post-publication reviews has challenged the traditional tenors of peer review. As a scientific journal and publisher, we must, therefore, roll with tides and keep up with the calls for innovation in the present to remain relevant.

Here in PJAHS, we recognize these changes and challenges. The coming few months shall be a period for us to reflect and respond to the current needs of our stakeholders within the greater socio-political landscape where we exist. There is a need to re-examine our policies, procedures, and policies in light of our product and prospects in the future. Regardless, we affirm our trust in peer review and recognize its

integral role in scientific and scholarly research publications.

PJAHS joins the international scholastic community in celebrating Peer Review Week 2020, celebrated on September 21-25, 2020. The theme of this year's celebration is dedicated to highlighting the integrity of peer review in research and its eventual publication.

### **References:**

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2. Smith R. Peer review: a flawed process at the heart of science and journals. Journal of The Royal Society of Medicine. 2006 Apr;99(4):178-8