



## The Necessities for the Transparent Peer-Review

*Jung Hun Lee, Jeong Ho Jeon, Kwang Seung Park, Tae Yeong Kim, Ji Hwan Kim, \*Sang Hee Lee*

*National Leading Research Laboratory, Department of Biological Sciences, Myongji University, Yongin, Gyeonggido 17058, Republic of Korea*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Email: sangheelee@mju.ac.kr

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### Dear Editor-in-Chief

A recent report noted that it is time for transparent peer-review ('open report' publishing the content of reviews for submitted manuscripts) to become the norm (1). What is necessary for the transparent peer-review?

First, trialing transparent peer-review is needed before running it as a whole because there might be some risks or barriers to its practice as follows: (i) public reviews might make reviewers reluctant to accept assignments or to criticize freely; (ii) published reviews might be used unfairly in subsequent evaluation of the authors for grants, jobs, awards or promotions; (iii) another risk is the 'weaponization' of reviewer reports; and (iv) published peer-review reports could also place editorial decisions under greater scrutiny and perhaps make editors more timid about overriding critical reviews (1).

As the *Genome Biology* transparent peer-review trial, half of the manuscripts that are peer-reviewed are assigned to the trial, and the other half can be used as a control group (traditional peer-review) (2). After this trial, journals will know whether it is necessary to permanently introduce the transparent peer-review. According to its preliminary data, there is a positive effect on the transparent peer-review.

Second, we suggested that if articles (for example, Commentary or News & Views), which inform readers about the new scientific advances in

recently published papers, contain reviewers' major comments (and/or authors' response to the comments) with making the reviewers the authors of these articles, the reviewers will be rewarded for their efforts and there will be an incentive to make their reports more constructive, which alleviate some risks or barriers for running the transparent peer-review as a whole.

Finally, some researchers think that junior reviewers might alleviate the review burden in the peer-review process for journal publication, and the involvement of junior researchers in the process could be a component of career building (3, 4), but junior reviewers are able to have some negative impact on the peer-review process.

According to the definition by Eurodoc ([http://eurodoc.net/sites/default/files/news/2018/01/15/attachments/eurodoc2017\\_juniorresearchersdefinitionandchallenges.pdf](http://eurodoc.net/sites/default/files/news/2018/01/15/attachments/eurodoc2017_juniorresearchersdefinitionandchallenges.pdf)), junior researchers are 'people who have been awarded a doctoral degree and are engaged in a temporary and defined period of advanced, not yet fully independent research'. Due to the limitations of their career status, junior reviewers are unable to carry out judicious and detailed reviews to avoid challenging senior researchers (5).

In addition, reviewers were chosen for the following reasons: (i) ability to fully and fairly evaluate the technical aspects of submitted manuscripts; (ii) availability to assess manuscripts with-



in the requested time period (one or two weeks); and so on. In case of the open peer-review process of manuscripts containing interdisciplinary technics, most junior reviewers focused on some specific technic(s) might take longer to complete their reviews, and then more and more authors appeal against journal's decision, which could increase (rather than alleviate) the review burden. In summary, the following points are considered for the successful transparent peer-review: (i) trialing the transparent peer-review before running it as a whole; (ii) transparent peer-review with reviewers' authorship; and (iii) negative impact of junior reviewers on the peer-review process.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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