How to review an article for the Netherlands Heart Journal

Suggestions for first-time reviewers and a reminder for seasoned experts.

On receipt of the invitation to review, you should: Read the invitation, which includes the abstract of the article. Click the link in the email and either accept or decline the invitation. The editor must be informed shortly after he/she has sent you the invitation. There are no consequences for refusing to review a paper. If you decline, please suggest a colleague who may be able to review the manuscript. You may not ‘transfer’ your own invitation to a colleague.

If you feel the review will take you longer to complete than normal, please contact the editor to discuss the matter.

Plagiarism: If you suspect that an article is a substantial copy of another work, please let the editor know, citing the previous work in as much detail as possible.

Do not disclose to others: Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents. They must not be shown to, or discussed with, others except as authorised by the editor. Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in a reviewer’s own research without the express written consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage. Requesting the opinion of a single colleague may be appropriate in some circumstances but you should always let the editor know beforehand. Most editors welcome additional comments, but whoever else is involved will also need to keep the review process confidential.

Reviewer identity: Reviewer identity is generally not shared with the author. To help us protect your identity, please do not reveal your name within the text of your review. This also implies that you should not attempt to contact the author.

Structure of the article

Layout and format: Authors are required to adhere to the journal’s Instructions for Authors, which can be found on: http://link.springer.com/journal/12471. If the manuscript does not meet the instructions and the editor has not mentioned this matter in the request to review, you may wish to contact the editor to discuss this. Otherwise, you should note this in your review. If the paper is otherwise good, the editor may choose to overlook the formatting issues (for example, if the author comes from outside the discipline but has something valuable to convey to the readers of this journal).

Length: Is the length (amount of words) of the article correct? Is this according to the instructions for authors?

Language and writing style: If an article is written in poor English, due to grammatical errors, you should mention this in your review report to the editor.
The writing style is important. Consider the three guidelines for successful communication - to be clear, concise, and correct - and whether the authors have achieved it. In particular, point out the use of scientific jargon, misspellings of chemical names, use of outmoded terminology or incorrect genetic nomenclature, and use of misspelled, incorrect, or outdated scientific names. In general, the use of abbreviations other than standard abbreviations and units of measures should be kept to a minimum. The term must be spelled out at first mention, with the abbreviation given in parentheses.

**Title:** Does it clearly describe the article?

**Abstract:** Does it reflect the content of the article? Is it not too long? If the article is an original article, is the abstract structured?

**Introduction:** Does it describe what the author hoped to achieve accurately, and clearly state the problem being investigated? Normally, the introduction should summarise relevant research to provide context, and explain what other authors' findings, if any, are being challenged or extended. It should describe the experiment, the hypothesis(es) and the general experimental design or method.

**Methods:** Does the author accurately explain how the data were collected? Is there sufficient information present for you to replicate the research? Does the article identify the procedures followed? Are these ordered in a meaningful way? If the methods are new, are they explained in detail? Was the sampling appropriate? Have the equipment and materials been adequately described? Does the article make it clear what type of data were recorded; has the author been precise in describing measurements?

**Results:** This is where the author(s) should explain in words what he/she/they discovered in the research. It should be clearly laid out and in a logical sequence. You will need to consider if the appropriate analysis has been conducted. Are the statistics correct? If you are not comfortable with statistics, please advise the editor when you submit your report. Interpretation of results should not be included in this section.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** Are the claims in this section supported by the results, do they seem reasonable? Have the authors indicated how the results relate to expectations and to earlier research? Does the article support or contradict previous theories? Does the conclusion explain how the research has moved the body of scientific knowledge forward?

**Figures and tables:** When these are included, please check them and if possible make suggestions for improvements. Do the figures and tables inform the reader and are they an important part of the story? Do the figures describe the data accurately? Do the authors present too many tables or figures in the form of...
undigested findings? Are all of them necessary in order to tell the story of this research inquiry; or can some be combined? If color is used, is this necessary for the figure?

Are the authors’ tables consistent with the format of currently accepted norms regarding data presentation? Are they not too large?

Has the author given supplementary material? Is this material appropriate for the manuscript?

**References:** It is very important that the references are in the correct style of the journal, Vancouver Style. Are the references appropriate for the article? Are the references up-to-date? Are there not too many references? Have there been any publications in the Netherlands Heart Journal itself?

**Your evaluation to the editor**

Should the paper be rejected for this journal? Or does it show sufficient promise for revision, in ways that you have clearly demonstrated in your review, to encourage the authors to invest weeks and months in revision for this journal?

Your bottom-line advice to the editor is crucial. Make a decision; state it clearly (in your confidential remarks to the editor on the page provided).

Once you have completed your evaluation of the article the next step is to write up your report. Below are some key points to consider during this task.

**Process:** Your review will be provided to you by the editor via the Editorial Manager System: [http://www.edmgr.com/nehj/](http://www.edmgr.com/nehj/). Please also send your evaluation to the editor through the system and not by email.

Your review must be written in English.

**Provide a quick summary:** We request you to complete the review form. Either way, it is helpful to provide a quick summary of the article at the beginning of your report. This serves the dual purpose of reminding the editor of the details of the report and also reassuring the author and editor that you have understood the article.

**Highlight key elements:** The report should contain the key elements of your review, addressing the points outlined in the preceding section. Commentary should be courteous and constructive, and should not include any personal remarks or personal details including your name.

**Explain your judgement:** Providing insight into any deficiencies is important. You should explain and support your judgment so that both editors and authors are able to fully understand the reasoning behind your comments. You should indicate whether your comments are your own opinion or are reflected by the data.

**Classify your recommendation:** When you make a recommendation, it is worth
considering the categories the editor most likely uses for classifying the article:
- Reject (explain reason in report)
- Accept
- Major revision (explain reason in report)
- Minor revision (explain reason in report)

**Acceptance/Rejection procedure.** The responsible editor gives his/her decision, based on the decisions of the reviewers, to the chief-editor. The final decision of whether to accept or reject a manuscript lies with the chief-editor.

**In case of help**

**Content:** If you have any queries relating to the content of the paper, please contact the responsible editor who has sent you the review invitation.

**Technical issues:** For technical issues relating to the Editorial Manager System (EMS), please contact: Judy Pieren, tel.: 078-6576580, email: judy.pieren@springer.com

**Any other questions:** Contact the coordinator of the office: Lieda Meester, tel. 030-638 38 56, email: l.meester@bsl.nl