

Neurocritical Care Reviewers' Instructions

Elements to assess

Overall considerations:

- Is the content appropriate for *Neurocritical Care*?
- For original articles, are the results novel?
- Does the title accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?
- Is the manuscript clearly and concisely written and is free of jargon?
- Is there appropriate reporting of conflicts of interest?
- Are there too many authors?
- Is language editing needed?

Does the abstract:

- State the question to be addressed?
- Accurately describes the study design?
- Present data not just trends for main results?
- Present conclusions that are based on the data NOT speculation?

Does the introduction:

- Introduce and put into perspective the purpose of the study?
- Summarize what has already been done (with proper primary citations), indicate a gap, raise a research question, or challenge prior work?
- Outline the purpose and goal of the project and clearly indicate what is novel and why it is significant?

Do the methods:

- Provide sufficient detail?
- Clearly describe study design; is it appropriate?
- Describe patient selection and randomization (if appropriate)
- Include a detailed description of intervention (if appropriate)
- Define a primary outcome measure
- Provide a detailed description of statistical approach

Do the results:

1. Present the data in a clear logical order
2. Make appropriate use of tables and figures
3. Repeat the data presented in tables in the text?
4. Are there better ways to present the data?

Discussion

- Are the results compared to those in the literature?

- Does it discuss the importance, validity and generalizability of the conclusions?
- Are limitations discussed?
- Are alternative explanations for the data offered?
- Are the conclusions (must be supported by the data) clearly distinguished from speculation?
- Are there unjustified claims and generalizations?

Figures and tables

- Does the legend describe everything in the figure or table, draw attention to its important features, and define all abbreviations? (Can the reader understand the figure without referring to the text?)
- Are the scales in graphs appropriate?
- Are estimates of error included?
- Are tables designed to easily find specific data?
- Are graphs used to display trends and make comparisons?

Recommendations

- Reject – there are major uncorrectable concerns about originality, relevance, validity or overall quality.
- Revise and reconsider – the paper is not acceptable as it stands but if the authors respond appropriately to the comments it could be.
- Revisions needed – the manuscript is acceptable but needs some cleaning up.
- Accept as is.

How to format the review

- Comments to editor (Not seen by author)
 - VERY IMPORTANT: State succinctly what you really think about suitability for publication and why
 - Tell me if there are aspects of the paper you don't feel qualified to evaluate
- Comments to authors
 - Start by **briefly** summarizing what questions was addressed and how the study was done.
 - Identify **major** issues– these are usually issues that need to be addressed to determine if the paper is suitable for publication. Focus on overall originality, relevance, validity and the overall quality of the presentation
 - List **minor** issues that need to be addressed that are not as critical to the decision to accept or not.

Review pointers

- Space is no longer a concern. Encourage tables and figures when appropriate.

- Never make any comment to the authors on whether or not you think the paper should be accepted
- Make sure the comments reflect your recommendation; if you recommend rejection, your comments should identify some major concerns.
- Where possible, be constructive in your comments. Your work should serve to educate the authors in how to improve their work.
- With each point, make it clear to the authors what they need to do
- Do not worry about errors of syntax or spelling

Reviewer FAQs

- When should I recommend rejection?
- What does the priority score mean?
- What should be covered in my review?
- Should I ask for more figures?
- What constitutes a conflict as a reviewer?
- Reviewers' checklist
- What if I'm not sure I have the expertise
- What if there are aspects of the paper I can't evaluate (i.e. statistics, specific method)
- What if I don't have time?



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