Western Pacific Surveillance and Response Guidelines for Reviewers

All articles in *Western Pacific Surveillance and Response* (WPSAR) are peer reviewed by two external peer reviewers (with the exception of regional analyses, letters to the editor, news items and meeting and conference reports). We are grateful for the time and effort contributed by reviewers to the quality of the articles published in WPSAR.

The WPSAR Editorial Team is grateful to all reviewers that have contributed their time and expertise to peer-review our articles. A full list of reviewers can be found in our website.

**ABOUT WPSAR**

The aims of WPSAR are:

1. to provide an open access journal to publish articles on the surveillance of and response to public health events and emergencies in the WHO Western Pacific Region and in areas with relevance to the Western Pacific Region; and

2. to build capacity in communicating epidemiological and operational research within the WHO Western Pacific Region.

Our objectives are:

1. to provide a platform for people working in surveillance and response in the Western Pacific Region to share their scientific and operational findings;

2. to publish a broad range of articles not limited to conventional research articles:
   - to disseminate short reports on outbreak investigations
   - to publish analyses of surveillance data on communicable diseases
   - to encourage the publication of evaluations of new and existing surveillance systems
   - to promote the use of risk assessment for public health by facilitating risk assessment articles
   - to support preparedness and response to public health events and emergencies through the dissemination of lessons learnt from such events; and

3. to build capacity in communicating epidemiological and operational findings in the Western Pacific Region through pre-submission assistance.

**Scope**

WPSAR covers all activities related to the surveillance of and response to public health events and emergencies, with a focus on topics that are relevant to the Western Pacific Region. Public health events may be acute or ongoing and can fall under any of the following areas: communicable diseases, natural disasters, food safety, bioterrorism, and chemical and radiological events. Other events and topics may also be considered. Response activities include those for acute events, e.g. responding to natural disasters, or for response to cases or epidemics of disease.

**Peer review process**

Peer review of articles is a vital step in the editorial process. The purpose of a review is to ensure the work has been undertaken correctly, the errors have been identified, the conclusions are supported by evidence, and appropriate literature has been referenced.

Every article submitted to WPSAR is initially screened by the Editorial Team to ensure it fits the scope. All articles, with the exception of regional analyses, letters to the editor, news items and meeting and conference reports, then undergo external peer review by a minimum of two reviewers. This blind peer review process ensures that the reviewer does not know the identity of the author(s) and the author(s) do not know the identity of the reviewer.

The request for review will come by e-mail and will include the abstract of the article. You will be asked to log onto our online journal management system to indicate whether or not you can undertake the review. Considerations should include: do you have the expertise required to do this review; can you be unbiased (i.e. no conflict of interest); and do you have the time to complete the review (estimated 2–5 hours for experienced reviewers, 8 for new reviewers). If you are unable to complete the review, please nominate an alternate reviewer.

If you agree to the peer review, we ask that you complete it within two weeks (48 hours for rapid publication). Your role as a reviewer is to provide comments and suggestions for improvement and a recommendation for publication. You will be asked to complete a specific review form for the article type; all review forms include space for general comments, specific questions for each article type and space for detailed comments to the author and editor. When providing suggestions for improvements, please be aware of the word limit for the article type for which you are reviewing. Suggestions that require a significant increase in the word count may be difficult to accommodate due to the word limit. All articles are rigorously edited for English, grammar and style after the peer review process. Therefore, your review
should be focused on the content, not on editing. Detailed and constructive comments, including explicit feedback on how to improve the article for publication, are preferred.

Please state the limitations of your expertise where relevant to the article. For example, if you do not have an understanding of an aspect of the article, e.g. cluster sampling; please state so in the review comments so that the editor can seek appropriate advice as to whether this aspect is correct. A recommendation for publishing is also requested, although the Coordinating Editor determines the final outcome based on all reviews received. These recommendations can be accept submission, accept with revisions, submit for review or decline submission.

Your comments will be de-identified and sent to the author for consideration. For articles whose outcome are either “accept submission” or “accept with revisions”, authors will be requested to revise the article according to the reviewer comments and to provide a separate document outlining how each reviewer comment was addressed. The Coordinating Editor will determine if all comments were adequately addressed prior to commencing the publication process.

If the outcome of the review process is “submit for review”, then the same process is followed. However, the resubmitted article and responses to the reviewer comments are sent back to the original reviewers for another round of peer review. The second round of comments is then sent to the author for his or her revision. The Coordinating Editor will assess whether both sets of reviewer comments have been adequately addressed prior to the article commencing the publication process.

We discourage the use of “decline submission” as we would prefer to work with our authors to get the article to the required standard. This option should only be recommended when the study is seriously flawed in its methodology. Please bear in mind that many of our submissions are based on operational research or field epidemiology, and therefore scientific rigour is not always possible.

The publication process comprises external editing, layout and proofreading. Following these steps, each article is approved by the Editorial Team and the authors before being published on the WPSAR website.

For instructions on using the online journal system, please refer to our WPSAR online journal system – User guide for reviewers.

**Conflicts of Interest**

A conflict of interest is defined by International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) as “when an author or author’s institution, reviewer, or editor has financial or personal relationships that inappropriately influence (bias) his or her actions”. Conflicts of interest may be financial, institutional, research or personal. A relationship does not always represent a conflict of interest and does not necessarily preclude publication in WPSAR. All reviewers will be required to state any potential conflicts of interest, which will be assessed by the Editorial Team.