TO BLIND OR NOT TO BLIND? THE SEARCH FOR A PERFECT PEER REVIEW METHODOLOGY

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Following *BioTechniques*' move to the Future Science Group, we've chosen to change the peer review model – henceforward, peer review will be performed on a double-blind basis, with both authors and reviewers unaware of the identity of the other party.

Why blind the review process? For time immemorial the peer review system has been questioned and criticized, yet a perfect model is as-yet undescribed. Single-blind peer review, where the reviewers know the identity of the authors yet not *vice versa*, has the advantage that reviewers feel free to critique a paper without pressure. However, this method is susceptible to bias – in 2015, for example, a storm erupted at one publisher after a reviewer suggested a paper would benefit from the addition of a male author to a previously all-female author list. While this is an extreme example, it highlights the flaw in the system.

Another method, open review, has recently begun to gain (somewhat slowly) in popularity. With both the author and reviewer names available, this method should prevent bias – however, it raises concerns that it could breed enmity and lead to overly positive reviews.

Double-blind review, where all parties are anonymous, appears to solve the above issues – reviewers can comment without pressure, and discussions between authors and reviewers can be held without bias or risk of damage to relationships. While there remain some disadvantages – such as the fact that it can be difficult to properly blind a manuscript covering a niche field – we feel it is the least problematic method currently available.

We're always open to hearing the thoughts of our authors on our processes that affect them. If you would like to share your thoughts on the peer review debate, let us know at openaccess@future-science-group.com

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