

# Inside the Publication Process

Justin Sorge RRT FCSRT MPH

I should probably disclose that I haven't seen a patient since late 2016. Although I have a decade of experience working at one of Western Canada's busiest tertiary care centres and Canada's second largest hospital, this lack of recent clinical exposure precludes an understanding of recent trends in therapy and technology. I would be at a loss in my capacity as Editor-in-Chief of this journal, to the detriment of its authorship and readership, if I was solely in charge of what gets published in the *Canadian Journal of Respiratory Therapy* (CJRT). Thankfully, the journal has a rich and diverse wealth of personnel upon whom I rely to guide its publication process. I would like to discuss this rigorous and multi-step process in this quarter's message (see Figure 1).



Justin Sorge

with a background in both respiratory therapy and research methodology, I review each submission with a focus on the merit of the scientific process employed and ensure that it adheres to established ethical guidelines, as well as appropriateness to the aim and scope of the *CJRT*. Unfortunately, I am not able to assess all avenues of respiratory care with expert opinion. As such, I believe my role is to review manuscripts in this regard as objectively as possible on these points. Fortunately, to assist in objectivity, there are many established and endorsed tools available for use. For clinical trials, the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT; <http://www.consort-statement.org/>) checklist may be used, with which I apply a focus on the methodology and reporting of results.

When a manuscript is submitted to the journal it is first passed on to the Editor-in-Chief for initial review and critique. As Editor-in-Chief

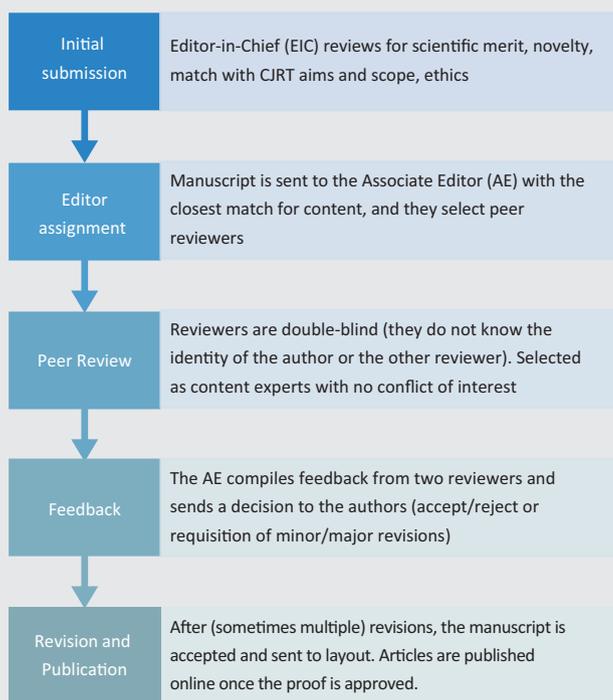
Observational research may be critiqued following the appropriate Strengthening the Reporting of Observational studies in Epidemiology (STROBE; <https://www.strobe-statement.org>) checklist. Few articles that do not meet such standards are returned with a request to revise and resubmit, with suggested revisions included, offering suggestions that may help strengthen the submission and its probability of publication. Manuscripts deemed sufficiently rigorous in these regards require subject-area and context guidance.

This is accomplished through recruitment of an Executive Editorial Board member, who can provide insight upon such appropriateness. I am invariably indebted to the diverse board, which provide such in addition to guidance on the direction of the journal. These members then recruit individuals with further subject-area expertise to provide peer review. To further ensure objectivity, our peer-review process is double-blind, meaning that referees and author(s) remain anonymous throughout. Selection of peer reviewers is done with an effort to prevent conflicts of interest by not inviting reviewers from the same institutions as authors. As conflicts may not be apparent through prior relationships, we always ask invited reviewers to disclose such, by way of declining invitations. Reviewers are provided a rubric with which they can further judge the submission on its originality, methodical rigor, adherence to ethical guidelines, appropriate reporting of results, and ensure authors have reviewed and cited relevant prior work.

Following peer review, the Executive Editor will compile the peers' remarks into a final report with a decision on the submission that is passed on to the authors. Final decisions include accept/reject or requisition of minor/major revisions along with constructive listed commentary and suggestions to be addressed. It is quite rare that the final decision on initial submissions will be acceptance. A quick scope of my supervisors and peers has not resulted in one such case and I am currently on a third round of revisions on a paper that has been accepted for publication.

When submitting a revision, we ask authors to create a "Response to Reviewers" document. This involves pasting all the comments into a document and explaining the changes made point by point (and highlighting these changes in the revised version). In most cases this is as

**FIGURE 1.**  
**The CJRT peer-review process.**



---

Correspondence: Justin Sorge, Research Associate, Canadian Institute of Substance Use Research, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada. E-mail: [editorinchief@csrt.com](mailto:editorinchief@csrt.com)

---



This open-access article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (CC BY-NC) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits reuse, distribution and reproduction of the article, provided that the original work is properly cited and the reuse is restricted to noncommercial purposes. For commercial reuse, contact [editor@csrt.com](mailto:editor@csrt.com)

simple as writing “change has been made.” This shouldn’t be a labour-intensive part of the process; it is meant to help speed the decision. It is also an opportunity for authors rebut specific comments; if you disagree with a comment, you are welcome to explain why this is the case. My advice is always to remain courteous in your responses; remember that reviewers have volunteered their time and expertise to improve the overall quality of your submission. Don’t be discouraged if you receive a long list of suggestions; as I mentioned, even the most experienced authors will get similar feedback. If it seems insurmountable at first, try to tackle it a bit at a time and you will most likely find that most suggestions are fairly straightforward.

Something that is often misunderstood in this process is what a rejection decision actually means. Sometimes rejection is cut and dry, as when the subject matter is not a match for our readership. However, what often happens is a rejection decision is taken by an Associate Editor when the paper has good ideas, but at the same time needs more than a major revision. In these cases, I would encourage the authors to consider the feedback and, if feasible, try to address the suggestions and resubmit.

Should your paper be accepted, the final part of our submission process is of course, publication. As of 2018, the journal switched to a rolling publication model, otherwise known as article-based publishing.

What this means is that when an article is accepted, rather than waiting for the next issue, the article is published online with a volume and article identifier (DOI). Acceptance to publication time is therefore reduced, and important respiratory research is available to our readership as soon as possible. Be sure to celebrate your accomplishment and spread the word about your publication to your networks, consider presenting your results locally or at the CSRT conference.

In closing, if you are still unsure about any aspect of the publication process as described here, be sure to contact us at [editor@csrt.com](mailto:editor@csrt.com). We are happy to help at any stage, and we look forward to seeing your submission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

*Justin Sorge RRT, FCSRT, MPH, Editor-in-Chief*