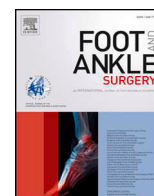


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Editorial

Is it unfair to reject a submission?



The very positive development of our journal led to an increased Impact Factor (IF) over the last years with 2.840 in 2021. This development is based on an increasing number of submissions, and vice versa, the increased IF leads to an increasing number of submissions. An increasing number of submissions leads to an increasing rejection rate to almost 80%. Consequently, the number of rejections is also increasing. As editor-in-chief, I receive an increasing number of complaints from authors about rejections. Notably, the number of complaints is increasing much more than the number of rejections. A recent assessment resulted in a "complaint rate of 10% of all rejections". Consequently, I asked myself several times if the rejections of our journal are fair or if the perception of authors regarding rejections has changed. I remember exactly one complaint of an author that showed a real mistake of the review process in decision making and the decision was rescinded. All other complaints against rejections have not shown any mistakes and the rejections were confirmed. Depending of the content of the complaint, I send a comment to the authors as follows:

Dear author(s),

thank you very much for your email. Your reaction on our rejection is absolutely up-to-date. In earlier times, in case of rejection, the reason for this and the potential for improvement was tried to find in the own skills, i.e. methods, wording, manuscript structure, etc. Today, in the modern times, in case of rejection, the reason for this and the potential of improvement is looked for among others, the "circumstances", and in this case the journal, the editors, the reviewers. Then, an email is sent to the editor-in-chief with detailed

analysis of the review, complaints, explanations and excuses. In our journal as in others, the recommendation of the blinded reviewers is the basis for decision (peer-review process). This process is as strong or as weak as the reviewers are. There is no possibility to maintain the peer-review principle when it is over-ruled by an editor. In conclusion, the decision remains reject and I take full responsibility for this."

Not necessary to mention that I receive more complaints as a reaction. Lately, I received an email in which an author was blaming our journal of being xenophobic because a submission was also but not only rejected because the reviewers stated that the English language was too difficult to understand. The author claimed that it is unfair to reject an article because of the wording. When keeping in mind that all reviewers do the reviews for free in addition to their daily work, I personally think that is it also unfair to burden the reviewers with submissions that are not understandable because of the wording. What do you think about rejections and reactions from authors as described? Please send an email to me (info@martinusrichter.de). As the journal belongs EFAS, and therefore you as EFAS members, I want to start this discussion to evolve the process for the future.

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