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Abstract Information

Abstract Title : Handling peer-review scams: a proposal to develop ‘peer-review validation tool’
Abstract : Background: Peer-review is the heart of publication process, which plays an important role in validating the quality of research. Online review process is quick, time saving and much efficient than paper review; however it also provides opportunity for frauds. Though, peer-review fraud is not new, recently it has made headlines where BMC retracted 43 journal articles with inappropriately influenced and compromised peer-review process. Such cases are alarming to have rigorous selection of reviewers and systems to be in place to avoid future scams. Each journal has its own database of reviewers, which may also provide opportunity for sham reviewers to behave as real ones with other journals, due to limited/lack of validation. Hence, we propose to develop a single ‘peer-review validation tool’ to tackle these sham reviewers. Methods: The proposed ‘peer-review validation tool’ will be an online system/site which can be used across all journals. All reviewers need to register preferably using their
institutional email addresses and provide additional details like, bio briefs, current financial disclosures, expertise, publications and contact details. Once registered, reviewers will have to validate their account using identity proofs and auto generated phone calls (on registered numbers), verifying the location; may also include stringent verification like bankers do. Journals will also have the opportunity to register on this site to find/select potential verified reviewers and also to verify details of suggested reviewers from authors. If an author suggests new reviewer or in case of doubt the journal may request reviewer to register on this site. Results: The new tool will broaden the scope of peer review protecting scientific integrity and halting fake reviewers from manipulating peer-review process. Conclusions: This tool may potentially help avoid peer-review fraud/misconduct, at least to some extent. The feasibility, technical and practical aspects need to be explored.