
Peer Review Information and Acknowledgements for ACC-RAC 2013

This is the 20th meeting of the scientific, peer-reviewed presentation section of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges Educational Conference, now a part of the ACC-Research Agenda Conference (ACC-RAC). This conference has grown substantially since its humble beginnings in 1994.

The purpose of this summary is to provide a brief review of the peer review process for the ACC-RAC 2013. The scientific presentations go through a peer-reviewed selection process, which means that they are not invited presentations as are the workshop and plenary sessions for this conference. The ACC Peer-Review Committee's mission is to provide unbiased, double-blinded, peer review process for submissions to this conference. This year, we received nearly 200 submissions, which is similar compared to recent years. Even though we received many submissions, we completed our tasks, submitted decisions to authors, and provided materials for continuing education by the declared deadlines.

The ACC-RAC submission and peer review process was completed online through the ACC-RAC peer review website, which helped to facilitate the processing of submissions for peer review. Authors followed the instructions in the call for submissions that was distributed online and through email, and that was published in the *Journal of Chiropractic Education*. Each submission was matched to multiple (4–6) different ACC Peer-Review Committee members, each from a different institution than the authors' institution. The match was based upon topic, range of experience, and institutional affiliation (e.g., submissions from one institution were submitted for review to authors of other institutions). Some reviewers were asked to review manuscripts that covered only a portion of their content expertise area, since not all reviewers are experts in all topic areas. For example, one reviewer may be an expert on systematic reviews, another a specialist in spinal injuries, and another an expert on spinal adjusting technique, but each may have been assigned to review a systematic review of adjusting patients with spinal injuries. As well, it is assumed that those who volunteered to serve on the peer review committee had the basic critical appraisal skills that would allow fundamental review of all

submissions for quality. All submissions were reviewed in the same unbiased manner through the process of blinded peer review. Submissions were evaluated on their quality and did not receive preferential treatment, nor were they singled out for rejection based upon certain reasons, such as author name, degrees, affiliation, or country of origin.

The peer reviewers evaluated the submissions using a structured form, and submitted their ratings and comments through the website. Any potential problems with ethical or scientific issues that were not identified originally on initial screening were brought before the Peer-Review Board for further investigation, discussion, and decision. These included, but were not limited to, concerns about content, ethical institutional review board compliance, and plagiarism. The peer review process is not able to, nor is it meant to, catch ethical and scientific misconduct-related issues. Any paper that did not comply with basic ethical or scientific standards, regardless of high rating scores, was not accepted for presentation.

Rating numbers and comments from reviewers were used to determine if a submission should or should not be presented as a poster or platform presentation. The reviewers' ratings and comments gave authors constructive feedback so that they could use these comments to improve their work before presentation, and to assist them with developing their paper for publication. Any process that involves humans, such as peer review, is not perfect. Reviewers sometimes contradict one another, and authors or reviewers may disagree with some of the decisions made by the review committee. As well, some submissions may receive only a "fair" rating at the time of preconference review; however, by the time of the conference the author has incorporated the constructive feedback from the peer reviewers and the presentation is far better than the one originally submitted. This would make it appear to an attendee as if the review process was flawed, whereas in reality the process was a success due to the improvements made by the author in time for the presentation at the conference based upon the peer review comments. It is important to note that not all flaws in submissions can be identified. Peer review is not meant to act as a policing or fraud detection agency, and we must

respect the limitations of peer review. As well, not all exceptional items were praised due to the space and time limitations of the reviewers. However, the overall peer review process, using a combination of blinded reviewers, has produced an excellent conference over the past 20 years. Peer review has its limitations, but still serves an important purpose of insuring quality of presentations at this scientific conference and continuing to improve our collective knowledge base.

Conference attendees may notice that platform sessions have a mixture of paper topics and sometimes papers in one set of presentations seem to be unrelated. This is because of the wide variety of topics that are submitted to the conference; therefore, the range of topics of accepted papers also is varied. The presentations are not invited; they are submitted and undergo peer review. We do not select in advance what topics we may receive. Because the ACC Peer-Review Committee focuses on quality and not quotas, sometimes a paper is accepted for presentation, but may stand alone as a topic. Therefore, this paper must be placed somewhere in the program and may not fit neatly into a series of presentations. The Peer-review Committee is more interested with the presentation of a quality paper instead of whether a paper fits neatly into a particular topic area. This is why the program has a wide variety of topics, and the number of platform and poster presentations will vary from year to year. The platform schedule for contributed papers is limited; therefore, we are allowed to select only a finite number of platform presentations.

The long range goals of the ACC Peer-review Committee include: (1) maintain the scholarship of the presentations and integrity of the conference, (2) increase quality of conference presentations, (3) increase number of published papers as a result of the conference, (4) increase number of experienced peer-reviewers, (5) provide scholarship opportunities for new peer-reviewers, and (6) provide mentorship and feedback to peer-reviewers and authors. Each year we strive to continue to improve our processes.

The ACC 2013 Peer-Review Committee succeeded in doing an excellent job. The committee is commended for their contribution to the continued improvement of scholarship of this conference. We thank the following people who provided peer-review for the 2013 conference:

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These committee members have done a wonderful job and should be recognized for their service of scholarly peer review. If you are interested in becoming a peer-reviewer for this conference, please consider participating in the 2014 conference. It would be wonderful to have you join us.

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