
Peer-Review Information and Acknowledgments for ACC-RAC 2014

This is the 21st meeting of the scientific, peer-reviewed presentation section of the Association of Chiropractic Colleges (ACC) 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 theme of this year’s conference is “Aiming for effective change: Leadership in chiropractic education, research, and clinical practice,” which is very fitting. If the true essence of leadership is to implement effective change, then in my observation over the past 2 decades, I can say that we have done much as it relates to education and research in the chiropractic profession. For leaders to be successful, they must (1) establish direction and vision, (2) communicate goals, and (3) develop coalitions and alliances. The ACC Peer-Review Committee continues to establish direction and vision for scientific presentations, communicate these goals, and develop alliances in order to improve the current state of science and scholarship through the scholarly art of peer review. We are pleased that each year we observe the quality of presentations improve and exceed the quality of the previous year. We are honored to be a part of the quality improvement of scholarship in the chiropractic profession. The purpose of this summary report is to provide a brief review of the peer-review processes for the ACC-RAC 2014.

This year we implemented a new process for the selection of the workshop proposals. Whereas in the past, the ACC-RAC Planning Committee would select from the various proposals submitted, this year we had an abundance of proposals, which prompted the new process. Over recent years, the ACC-RAC planning committee has received more and more workshop proposals. The selection process was becoming especially challenging for several reasons:

(1) There are more proposals than there are slots available in the program. Adding more slots would not solve the problem but would create more problems as then the number of attendees would be diluted. Thus, we needed to provide a fair means to select the best workshops from the proposals for available slots.

- (2) The people on the planning committee should not make decisions on the workshop proposals that they have submitted. Thus, having a peer-review team outside of the planning committee to provide a blinded selection process is needed.
- (3) There are a wide variety of needs for the attendees; namely, 4 domain areas: education, research, clinical, and administration. It is essential that our workshop tracks provide skill building and training experience in each of these 4 areas during the workshop tracks. Thus, having a Workshop Peer-Review team with a similar composition would allow workshop proposals to be fairly judged and these results presented to the ACC-RAC planning committee.

The purpose of blinded peer review of workshop proposals is to (1) select the highest quality workshops based upon objective criteria, (2) provide a fair process by which workshop proposals are rated and selected for the ACC-RAC program, (3) distribute the process of workshop proposal review to a greater number of stakeholders, and (4) increase the body of expertise of those reviewing the workshop proposals.

An overview of the workshop peer-review process is included here. The ACC-RAC Peer-Review Chair collected workshop forms and materials by the due date. The forms were evaluated initially for completeness. Any items that were missing or did not match the description in the call for workshops were brought to the attention of the workshop proposal author. The final materials were blinded and included on an online platform that allowed peer reviewers to review and rate the workshops. Workshop Peer Reviewers reviewed all proposals. The ratings, rankings, and comments were collected, and then submitted to the ACC-RAC Planning Committee for review and final decision. Workshop reviewers were not to be involved with a workshop proposal; however, they had to have expertise with educational methods and workshop delivery, demonstrate the ability to provide critical appraisal and peer review, and demonstrate reliability in completing tasks on time. The ACC-RAC Workshop Peer-Review Committee did an excellent job with their reviews

and are recognized here by name, with their institution and area of expertise in parentheses: Ashley Cleveland (Cleveland Chiropractic College, Education, Administration), Greg Cramer (National University of Health Sciences, Research Director, Clinical), Bart Green (Department of Defense, Clinical, Education, Researcher), Cheryl Hawk (Logan University, Research Director, Clinical), Mike Mestan (New York Chiropractic College, Education, Administration), and John Mrozek (Texas Chiropractic College, Education, Administration).

The following is a description of the peer-review processes for the scientific platform and poster presentations. The ACC Peer-Review Committee's mission is to provide an unbiased, double-blinded, peer-review process for submissions to this conference. This year we received 203 scientific submissions. Even though we received this 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 Web site, which helped to facilitate the processing of submissions for peer review. Authors followed the instructions provided in the call for submissions, which was distributed online, sent by e-mail, and was published in the *Journal of Chiropractic Education*. Each submission was matched to multiple (4 to 6) different ACC Peer-Review Committee members, each from a different institution than the author's institution. The match was based upon topic, range of experience, and institutional affiliation (eg, submissions from one institution were submitted for review to authors of other institutions). Some reviewers were asked to review manuscripts that covered 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 techniques, but each may have been assigned to review a systematic review of spinal manipulation of patients with spinal injuries. As well, it is assumed that those who volunteered to participate in the peer-review committee had the basic critical appraisal skills that would allow fundamental review for quality of all submissions. 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 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 Web site. Any potential problems with ethical or scientific issues, which were not originally identified 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.

Both rating numbers and comments from reviewers were used to determine if a submission should or should not be presented as either a poster or platform presentation. The reviewers' ratings and comments gave authors constructive feedback, so they could use these comments to improve their work prior to 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. Moreover, while some submissions may only receive a "fair" rating at the time of preconference review, 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 owing to the improvements made by the author (based upon the peer-review comments) in time for the presentation at the conference. 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 owing 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 ensuring the 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 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 is also varied. The presentations are not invited; they are submitted and undergo peer review. Thus, 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 or not 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 varies from year to year. The platform schedule for contributed papers is limited; therefore, we are only allowed to select 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 2014 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 2014 conference:

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These committee members have done a wonderful job and should be recognized and commended for their service of scholarly peer review. If you are interested in becoming a peer reviewer for this conference, please consider joining us for the 2015 conference. It would be wonderful to have you join us.

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