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## Peer review information and acknowledgments for ACC-RAC 2015

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This is the 22nd 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 "Interprofessional Collaboration: Working Together for a Better Future." 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. Each year we observe the quality of presentations improve and exceed the quality of the previous year. Through this process, 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 2015.

The ACC-RAC Planning Committee has received progressively more workshop proposals over the years. The selection process is challenging for several reasons. There are more proposals than space available in the program. Adding more slots would create problems because the number of attendees would be diluted. Thus, we are presented with the challenge of providing a fair means to select the best workshops for available slots. To ensure a fair process, the planning committee should not make decisions on workshop proposals that they have submitted. Therefore, having a separate peer review team, which uses a blinded process, has been implemented. As well, there are a wide variety of needs for the attendees (i.e., education, research, clinical, and administration), and workshops should provide skill building in these 4 areas. Consequently, having a workshop peer review team allows workshop proposals to be fairly judged, as the team is well rounded. The purpose of blinded peer review of workshop proposals is to (1) select the highest quality workshops using objective criteria, (2) provide a fair process by which workshop proposals are rated and selected, (3) distribute 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 workshop peer review process is included here. The ACC-RAC Workshop Peer Review Committee chair collected workshop forms and materials by the due date. The forms were evaluated initially for completeness. Any items that were missing or that did not match the description in the call for workshops were brought to the attention of the workshop proposal author. A group of reviewers was then invited based on the input from the ACC-RAC Planning Committee. The peer review committee chair then developed a blinded packet that included instructions to the reviewers and copies of all the complete workshop proposals. The reviewers reviewed each of the proposals, then rated and commented on each. Once the reviewers returned their rating sheets, these results were formatted into a review packet by the peer review committee chair and then presented to the ACC-RAC Planning Committee. The ratings, rankings, and comments were reviewed by the ACC-RAC Planning Committee, and a meeting was held for final decisions. Workshop reviewers were not to be involved with a workshop proposal. 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 (presented with name, institution, and area of expertise): Ashley Cleveland (Cleveland Chiropractic College, education, administration), Bart Green (Department of Defense, clinical, education, researcher), Cheryl Hawk (Logan University, research director, clinical), Kathryn Hoiriis (Life University, researcher, clinical, education), Mike Mestan (New York Chiropractic College, education, administration), and Greg Snow (Palmer College of Chiropractic-West, clinical, 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 198 scientific submissions. 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 web site, which helped to facilitate the processing of submissions for peer review. Authors followed the instructions in the call for submissions that was distributed online, through e-mail, and published in the *Journal of Chiropractic Education*. Each submission was matched to multiple (4 to 6) different ACC Peer Review Committee members, each from an institution different from the authors' institutions. The match was based upon topic, range of experience, and institutional affiliation (e.g., submissions from one institution were submitted for review to authors from 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 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 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 that were not originally identified on initial screening were brought before the peer review board for further investigation, discussion, and decision. 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 that 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 that of 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 may have 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 the process was actually a success owing 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 space available and the time limitations of the reviewers. However, the overall peer review process, using a combination of blinded reviewers, has produced an excellent conference for over 20 years. Peer review has its limitations, but it still serves the important purpose of ensuring 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. Because of the wide variety of topics that are submitted to the conference, 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 rather than if 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 can select only a finite number of platform presentations.

The long-range goals of the ACC Peer Review Committee include the following: (1) maintain the scholarship of the presentations and integrity of the conference, (2) increase quality of conference presentations, (3) increase the number of published papers as a result of the conference, (4) increase the 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 2015 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 2015 conference:

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These peer review committee members have done an outstanding 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 2016 conference. It would be wonderful to have you join us.

#### **About the Author**

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