GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS (AND AUTHORS)

Purpose of Peer Review

The purpose of peer review for *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery* is twofold:

1) To evaluate objectively the science, and potential impact, of the submitted paper, and
2) To provide a constructive critique indicating how the paper could be or could have been improved by the authors.

Critiques are primarily directed to authors and secondarily to the editor. Reviewers should avoid comments stating whether an article should be published. In all instances reviewers should respect the authors' efforts and avoid disparaging or unpleasant comments. Reviewers are not asked to copyedit papers, but should comment if language editing is needed. Reviewers also should be alert to scientific misconduct, which is defined as falsification, fabrication, or plagiarism. If clinical or laboratory results are far better than expected in the reviewer's experience, this impression should be passed onto the editor. Reviewers are reminded that the submitted manuscript is a privileged communication owned by the authors.

Reviewer CME

Qualifying reviews are eligible for 3 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. More information on Reviewer-based CME can be found at http://www.annalsthoracicsurgery.org/reviewer_cme. The Editor respects the time and effort that each reviewer has expended on behalf of the author and all readers of *The Annals*. The annual Thank You to reviewers published in *The Annals* is an additional recognition of the reviewers' large contribution to our profession and to specific colleagues who seek to expand our collective knowledge.

Peer Review Invitation

The Annals peer review system is invitation-based. Reviewers must respond within 5 days of the invitation email if they agree/decline to review the manuscript. Reviewers should **agree** to review if:

a) The manuscript is within their area of expertise.
b) They plan to review within the 14-day deadline.

Reviewers should **decline** to review manuscripts for the following reasons:

a) An intellectual or financial conflict exists between the reviewer and authors or between the reviewer and commercial products that are integral to the content of the article.
b) They believe they cannot complete the review in the 14-day window due to other commitments.
c) The paper is outside their area of expertise.

Article Type

Broad categories of papers that are peer reviewed include the following:

- Original Scientific Articles*
- New Technology papers*
- Review Articles
- Case Reports, How to Do It articles, and Images
- Select Editorials and Surgical Heritage articles

***Article types qualify for earning CME credit**

General Requirements for Publication

- The criteria for publication differ between categories of manuscripts; however, the following represent criteria for all submissions:
- The paper should conform to the **Information for Authors** and be written in proper, readable English.
- The paper should address an important or interesting subject and provide new and original information.
- When human or animal subjects are studied, manuscripts must include statements indicating compliance with protective laws and guidelines.
- Illustrative material should be well chosen, of good quality, and de-identified.

Reviewer Scoring

Editors provide reviewer ratings based on a 1-5 scale: 5 = Excellent; 4 = Good; 3 = Satisfactory; 2 = Deficient; and 1 = Poor/Incomplete. Reviewers will not see their individual scores for each manuscript review, but can request their average score rating from the editorial staff at any time (please e-mail: theannals@sts.org).

Reviews will vary depending on the article type, but reviewers should refer to the following rubric when completing manuscript reviews. This rubric represents a general method of how Editors score reviews (Table 1).

Guidance by Article Type

Original Scientific Article

The following topics are offered to help guide the reviewer's assessment of an original scientific article. Not all topics are relevant to every article.

Title should reflect the content of the article and be concise and clear.

Abstract should indicate the purpose of the study, subjects and methods used, most important results and the main conclusions that the data support.

Introduction should indicate the rationale and focus of the study and state the purpose or hypothesis.

Methods should present the design of the study; fully describe the number of subjects and the exclusion and inclusion criteria; indicate whether subjects were enrolled consecutively; state whether institutional regulatory boards reviewed study protocols and whether human subjects gave consent; describe how comparison groups were assembled (eg, randomization scheme, matching, etc); describe methods used to gather data, including follow-up data; state the primary outcome variable; identify secondary outcome variables; indicate whether or not observers were blinded with respect to group assignment; describe how outcome measurements were made and validated; describe the statistical design of the study; and indicate the statistical methods used to analyze the outcome data.

Randomized controlled trials (RCT) should be free of bias and of misleading information due to, for example, insufficient numbers of subjects and failure to define primary and secondary endpoints. Articles reporting on an RCT should adhere to International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommendations regarding RCTs (http://www.consort-statement.org).

Results should concisely present the most important findings in text and provide data better represented graphically in tables or figures. Generally data should not appear in both text and tables/figures. Data should be reported as means or medians with appropriate indicators of variance and exact p values in tables and text. When appropriate some data may be reported as median and ranges or quartiles. Figures should be well selected to highlight important findings and should not be used to present data of lesser significance. Survival and event curves should indicate specified confidence limits or subjects at risk at

Table 1. Reviewer Scoring Rubric

❑ Thoroughly assesses **most if not all** of the following: the article's interest to readers; strengths and weaknesses; originality; clarity of text, tables, illustrations and figure legends; presentation; analysis of results; credibility of results; importance of the findings; depth of scholarship; relationship of the results to the existing literature; and presence of marginally relevant or unnecessary archival material ❑ Provides thorough and detailed comments and suggestions for the authors, including notation of major vs minor comments ❑ Addresses, if applicable, ethical issues, such as scientific misconduct; prior publication of all or part of the data; plagiarism; transgression of human or animal rights; or dishonesty	**5** (Excellent)
❑ Assesses **some/most** of the following: the article's interest to readers; strengths and weaknesses; originality; clarity of text, tables, illustrations and figure legends; presentation; analysis of results; credibility of results; importance of the findings; depth of scholarship; relationship of the results to the existing literature; and presence of marginally relevant or unnecessary archival material ❑ Provides detailed comments and suggestions for the authors ❑ Addresses, if applicable, ethical issues, such as scientific misconduct; prior publication of all or part of the data; plagiarism; transgression of human or animal rights; or dishonesty	**4** (Good)
❑ Assesses **some** of the following: the article's interest to readers; strengths and weaknesses; originality; presentation; analysis of results; credibility of results; importance of the findings; depth of scholarship; relationship of the results to the existing literature ❑ Provides detailed comments and suggestions for the authors ❑ Addresses, if applicable, ethical issues, such as scientific misconduct; prior publication of all or part of the data; plagiarism; transgression of human or animal rights; or dishonesty	**3** (Satisfactory)
❑ Provides **cursory** comments regarding the article's interest to readers; its strengths and weaknesses; originality; and results ❑ Suggestions for the authors are **minimal** ❑ Review is poorly written and **of little help** to the authors/editors	**2** (Deficient)
❑ Provides **little to no** comments about the article's interest to readers; its strengths and weaknesses; originality; and results ❑ Suggestions for the authors are **minimal to nonexistent** ❑ Review is poorly written and **unhelpful** to the authors/editors	**1** (Poor/ Incomplete)

appropriate intervals. Regression diagrams should include the regression equations, regression coefficient and exact *p* value in the figure legend. Figure legends should adequately and clearly describe the important information illustrated.

Comment should not repeat results, but should point out the significance and conclusions of the new data, integrate the authors' new data with that in the prior literature, draw inferences and conclusions regarding the question or purpose addressed by the study and point out the limitations of the study. The **Comment** section should not be a review of the literature.

References should be selected, properly cited, reasonably current, accurate and in proper format. Important omissions should be noted.

New Technology

Articles describing new technology are necessarily descriptive and do not pose or test a hypothesis. These articles evaluate new devices, systems, machines, equipment, instruments, monitors, implantable material and similar technology designed for improving patient care and outcomes. The reviewer is asked to evaluate the efficacy, safety and indications of the new technology and the rigor, completeness and objectivity of the evaluation study. The reviewer should also assess compliance with the New Technology format and the format of the structured abstract, which differs from that of original scientific articles.

Topics which the reviewer should consider include:

- Probable importance or usefulness of the technology.
- Problem or task that the technology addresses.
- Newness and innovation of the technology.
- How well the technology is described and illustrated.
- Protocol used for evaluation.
- Compliance with human and animal protection protocols.
- Methods used to test the technology; and the results obtained.
- Reasons for selecting the methods of testing and evaluation.
- Whether all studies used in the evaluation are included in the report.
- Ease and difficulties in application including successes and failures.
- Advantages and complications of the new technology.
- Whether late adverse events are included or should be included in the evaluation.

The conclusion section should summarize the indications, deficiencies, and drawbacks. The article should have an objective, dispassionate tone, and avoid the enthusiasm of an advertisement or endorsement.

The reviewer needs to inspect the Disclosure statement after the text, before the References. This statement should disclose the source of funds used for the evaluation study and whether or not the product was purchased, borrowed, or donated by the manufacturer or inventor. Conflict of interest statements for individual authors are disclosed by each author on the Conditions for Publication Form and published in a conflict box at the bottom of the title page of the article.

Case Reports, How to Do It, Images

These feature articles are a popular and instructive part of *The Annals*. Case reports describe interesting presentations of disease and innovative management of the patient's problem. How to Do It articles emphasize innovations in the operative management

of technical challenges and new ways of doing things. Images, which must fit on one page, are graphics of interesting presentations of disease within the chest.

The primary criteria for review are the report's interest to readers; its uniqueness or innovation of the case, cases, or procedure; and its instructional value. Reviewers should evaluate the clarity and completeness of the case or procedure descriptions and the selection and quality of the illustrative material. Reviewers should also note whether or not the paper adheres to the format restrictions enumerated in the Information for Authors. The reference list should be selective rather than inclusive.

Review Article

Reviewers should assess the importance of the subject matter, need for the review and probable interest to readers. Reviews of very rare and unusual diseases are discouraged; subject matter should be sufficiently broad to have instructional and practical value for readers. Reviewers should note if authors have respected the format and restrictions of this category as stated in the Information for Authors. Meta-analyses should conform to PRISMA guidelines for transparent reporting (http://www.prisma-statement.org/).

The Introduction should provide the rationale for reviewing the subject matter and provide the outlines of what is included and not included in the review. In the Methods section reviewers should assess the methods used to search for articles, including search words and databases used. The body of the review should be well organized with well-chosen topical headings arranged in logical order. The organization, choice of topics, logical progression of topics and overall clarity and completeness of the text are important criteria for assessment. Within each topical heading the material should be presented in an integrated, comprehensive, objective manner. Statements should be referenced accurately. Reviewers should look for a brief summary of the topical content before the author proceeds to the next topic. Reviewers should reject topical presentations consisting of one-sentence précis of referenced articles arranged serially.

The review should provide a general overview of the subject matter assessing progress, pointing out deficiencies in present management and indicating opportunities and directions of future work. The reviewer should also assess the selection of references and note important absences or trivial inclusions.