

Study examines development of peer review research in biomedicine

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An analysis of research on peer review finds that studies aimed at improving methods of peer review and reporting of biomedical research are underrepresented and lack dedicated funding, according to a study in the March 12 issue of *JAMA*.

Mario Malicki, M.D., M.A., of the University of Split School of Medicine, Split, Croatia, and colleagues analyzed research presented at the International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication (PRC) since 1989. The first PRC was organized to "subject the editorial review process to some of the rigorous scrutiny that editors and reviewers demand of the scientists whose work they are assessing." The researchers collected data on authorship, time to publication, declared funding sources, article availability, and citation counts in Web of Science. The analysis included 614 abstracts.

The researchers found that experimental studies aimed at improving methods of [peer review](#) and reporting of biomedical research are still underrepresented on the pages of medical journals. "Although the peer review research community is aware of the consequences of nonpublication of research, 39 percent of studies presented at PRCs have not been fully published. In our cohort, we were unable to determine whether the underreporting was selective [e.g., publication favoring positive results] and were not able to determine its causes."

Peer review and other editorial procedures have the potential to influence the knowledge base of health care, the authors write. "Despite

their critical role in biomedical publishing, methods of peer review are still underresearched and lack dedicated funding. Systematic and competitive funding schemes are needed to build and sustain excellence, innovation, and methodological rigor in peer review research."

In an accompanying editorial, Drummond Rennie, M.D., of the University of California, San Francisco, and Annette Flanagin, R.N., M.A., of *JAMA*, Chicago, comment on the studies in this issue of *JAMA* that examine peer review and the publishing of [biomedical research](#).

"... articles on how to improve research, of which publication is an integral part, are important reminders that no matter how much research on peer review and publication has been presented at the Peer Review Congresses and elsewhere, these studies are but part of a widespread movement to improve the scientific literature. As the reports in this issue of *JAMA* indicate, discovering the extent of the problems and testing methods to correct them will require a massive and prolonged effort on the part of researchers, funders, institutions, and journal editors."

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