

Single-blind vs double-blind peer review and effect of author prestige

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In a study appearing in the September 27 issue of *JAMA*, Kanu Okike, M.D., M.P.H., of the Kaiser Moanalua Medical Center, Honolulu, and colleagues examined if bias with single-blind peer review might be greatest in the setting of author or institutional prestige.

Most medical journals practice single-blind review (authors' identities known to reviewers), but double-blind review (authors' identities masked to reviewers) may improve the quality of reviews. This study was conducted at *Clinical Orthopaedics and Related Research*, an orthopedic journal that allows authors to select single-blind or double-blind peer review. Potential reviewers were informed that a study on [peer review](#) would occur in the coming year, and allowed to opt out.

Between June 2014 and August 2015, reviewers were randomly assigned to receive single-blind or double-blind versions of an otherwise identical fabricated manuscript, which was indicated as being written by 2 past presidents of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons from prominent institutions. Five subtle errors were included to determine differences in how critically the manuscript was examined. The primary outcome was recommendation of acceptance or rejection.

The authors found that [reviewers](#) (n = 119) were more likely to recommend acceptance when the prestigious authors' names and institutions were visible (single-blind review) than when they were redacted (double-blind review) (87 percent vs 68 percent) and also gave higher ratings for the methods and other categories. There was no

difference in the number of errors detected.

The researchers note that the study was conducted at a single orthopaedic journal; generalizability to other journals and other fields of medicine is unknown.

More information: *JAMA*, [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2016.11014](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.11014)

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