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## Editorial

### Timely Completion of Review Process – Journals' Basic Responsibility

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Scientific research is progressing rapidly in a dramatic pace. Research productivity in terms of publications, product development, and citations have become key performance indicators in the assessment of higher education institutions (HEIs) and individual researchers. Most HEIs have adopted rigorous recruitment processes to hire research-oriented faculty and implemented various programs to train, support, recognize, and retain productive researchers. The academic community has realized that it cannot survive without research and publishing excellence. They are experiencing institutional pressure to produce an annual minimum number of publications as mandatory requirement to secure their job, as well as to satisfy the essential promotion criterion for number publications in prescribed journals.

On the other hand, a huge number of candidates are getting enrolled for master, doctoral, and postdoctoral programs in various universities around the globe. Most of these candidates have different types of commitments and constraints to finish their programs within a preset timeframe. When publication in prescribed journals becomes mandatory for submission of thesis/dissertation, the candidates undergo severe stress due to the desperate delay in getting their works published. Moreover, as the scientific innovations are progressing rapidly and competitively, any delay in publishing can make novel findings outdated, which obviously creates a serious damage to the researcher's career. At this juncture, there is a growing concern among the researchers regarding timely publication of their research findings.

This situation has been exploited by many commercial open access publishers by offering fast-track review process. However, their high processing charge is unaffordable for many authors,

who do not have a funding source. With the aggressive penetration of these publishers in the market, most leading free-of-charge publishers are struggling to survive. To tackle this, they have come up with hybrid publishing mode, where authors can choose either open access (payable) or subscription (free) mode. Unfortunately, the article processing and peer-review in the second option have nowadays become unacceptably slow. It is often experienced that submissions remain unattended for many weeks waiting for administrative process, and status shows 'with editor' for over a month and 'under review' for even up to one year. I have recently withdrawn more than three submissions when they were kept 'with editor' for over two months without sending for peer review.

It becomes more tragic when these journals do desk-rejection after keeping submissions for months simply by citing the reason that the paper is 'out of scope'. A simple question arises: do they need more than two months to check the scope of submission? Another level of negligence from the journals (mainly editors) has been noticed by holding submissions under the status "required reviews completed" or "decision in process" for unreasonably long period. It becomes more hurting to the authors when editors express "disapproval" when they receive polite reminders. Having said this, one cannot ignore the performance of many journals that are really responsible in their dealings. The editors have a great role to play here to keep the editorial team dynamic, proactive, and author friendly. Let us hope that the editors and publishers give due attention to this issue by adopting a strategic policy to complete the review process within a reasonable predeclared time.

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