

## Untold reasons for declining review invitations

## Raisons non divulguées du refus d'invitations à évaluer

Shigeki Matsubara<sup>1,2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Jichi Medical University, Tochigi, Japan; <sup>2</sup>Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Koga Red Cross Hospital, Koga, Ibaraki, Japan; <sup>3</sup>Medical Examination Center, Ibaraki Western Medical Center, 555 Otsuka, Chikusei, Ibaraki 308-0813, Japan  
Correspondence to: Shigeki Matsubara, M.D., Ph.D., Emeritus and Visiting Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Jichi Medical University, 3311-1 Shimotsuke, Tochigi 329-0498, Japan; phone: +81-285-58-7376; fax: +81-285-44-8505; email: [matsushi@jichi.ac.jp](mailto:matsushi@jichi.ac.jp)  
Published ahead of issue: Jul 21, 2025; published: Sept 10, 2025; CMEJ 2025, 16(4) Available at <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.81790>  
© 2025 Matsubara; licensee Synergies Partners. This is an Open Journal Systems article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Dear Editors,

Lotoski et al.<sup>1</sup> analyzed the enablers and barriers of review acceptance. I have reviewed 2,630 manuscripts (Web of Science), but my recent activity has decreased. I share my reasons to complement their discussion.

Reviewing gave me real-world merits: touching new data, learning sub-specialty-specific expressions, and a good review might favorably impress the journal and/or editor and help my next submission. While this may not apply to all journals, I personally felt that such impressions might have actually prompted me to review. Situations may have changed.

Preprints provide new data. For time-effectiveness, a five-hour PubMed and preprint search is more likely to give me “new” data than a five-hour review of a manuscript. Generative AI helps generate appropriate phrases; this is a gift for non-native authors: no need to rely on the review to become accustomed to area-specific expressions.

Open access journals with APC also changed the situation. Ten journals used to be my targets: I accepted review invitations from them. Four recently became open access with APC;<sup>2</sup> I abandoned submission to these four and now rarely accept their review invitations. One might hesitate to spend several hours reviewing for journals that now charge authors, including former reviewers, substantial APCs.

Humble solutions. First, reviewers who provide excellent reviews should be recognized as “Best Reviewer of the Year.” Such awards may even influence academic promotion. Second, open access journals might consider waiving APCs for frequent reviewers, or rethinking the balance between reviewer contribution and author cost. Third, review invitation letters should come from the handling editor, not the “editorial office.” Recognizing, “That esteemed editor invited me!” may motivate greater effort.

Although I still believe reviewing is a researcher’s responsibility,<sup>3</sup> real-world merits are now needed to uphold this educational cornerstone.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this article.

**Funding:** None.

**Edited by:** Marcel D’Eon (editor-in-chief)

## References

1. Lotoski L, O'Brien J, D'Eon MF. Reviewers' views on the editorial review processes of the Canadian Medical Education Journal. *Can Med Educ J*. 2025;16(1):128-140. <https://doi.org/10.36834/cmej.77193>.
2. Matsubara S: Letter to the Editor: open access transition in obstetrics and gynecology journals-the international impact. *Int J Gynaecol Obstet*. 2024;165(3):1300-1301. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijgo.15517>.
3. Matsubara S: A reviewer-friendly review system: to be able to follow a review process in real time. *J Obstet Gynaecol Res*. 2024;50(2):275. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jog.15839>.