

Students as Reviewers: Using a Near-Peer Review Process in World's First Pharmacy Student Research Journal



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NAPSA

Joanne Wickens^{1,2}, Forrest Tang^{1,2}, Verity Boustead², Steven Walker³

¹ Australian Pharmacy Students' Journal (APSJ), Australia.

² National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA), Australia.

³ Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Monash University, Melbourne, VIC

Background

In January 2022, the Australian Pharmacy Students' Journal (APSJ), a student-led pharmacy journal was established. Students are engaged as peer-reviewers in this journal, an innovative approach to strengthen an early career pharmacy research culture.

Student-led journals have had positive impacts on academic performance.¹ However, there is a lack of research measuring the impact of a student peer-reviewer experience.

Aims

Primary Aim:

To evaluate the student perception of a near-peer review process for a pharmacy student journal.

Methods

Becoming a student reviewer:

The APSJ invites pharmacy students through pharmacy student association advertisements to join a pool of academic and student reviewers.

Students who have expressed interest first undergo a reviewer online training module before undertaking the role.

The reviewing module introduces students to the importance and process of academic reviewing and also provides additional resources to use throughout the review process. Upon completion of the training, students are deemed credentialed in the near-peer review process and can then be offered articles to review.

Near-peer review process:

Each article submitted to the APSJ is reviewed by two students and one academic reviewer.

Data collection:

Student reviewers were invited to complete an anonymous online survey developed by the research team to evaluate their experience. The survey was open from 20.09.22. to 04.07.23. Respondents were asked to rate elements of their experience across a 5-point Likert scale (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strong agree) and respond to open-ended questions.

Results

Between 04.07.2021 and 24.07.2023, 29 students have been reviewers, of which 69% (20/29) completed the survey, 45% (9/20) were from fourth year, 35% (7/20) were from Intern year, 20% (4/20) were from third year. When asked at the time of completing the review, 70% (14/20) of participants were either currently completing or have completed a research project, 20% (4/20) had no research experience and 10% (2/20) had previously published several research projects.

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The experience was valuable to me	5%	-	10%	30%	55%
I have gained research skills from this experience	-	-	10%	50%	40%
My understanding of the peer-reviewing process has improved	-	-	5%	30%	65%
I felt well prepared for this role	-	10%	35%	45%	10%
If eligible, I would be interested in participating as a reviewer again	-	-	10%	20%	70%
The timeline for reviewing was manageable	-	10%	5%	35%	50%
This experience has encouraged me to participate further in research	-	-	20%	35%	45%

Table 1: Pharmacy student's perception of their reviewing experience via the APSJ (n=20 respondents)

"Learning about the work that goes into preparing an academic journal and reviewing skills I can use for the future"

"It gave me the opportunity to reflect on how best to provide feedback that is effective/efficient and succinct, forcing me to constantly review my own comments to ensure they are helpful for the writer by imagining myself in their position"

"Being a student reviewer provided an insight into the process of research which I found valuable, and I believe this will be an access point for me to integrate into more roles/involvement into research in the future"

"Being able to look at a piece of written material critically has improve my own research writing skills"

Figure 1: Pharmacy students' perception on what they have gained from being a student reviewer in an academic journal

Discussion

A majority of student respondents who participated in the peer review process perceived the experience improved their research skills and encouraged them to participate in further research. The results are similar to the known positive impacts of student journals on academic performance.¹ However, this is the first time to our knowledge that the perceived impact of the student peer-review process has been investigated.

The results are limited to student perceptions of the impact of this experience and maybe influenced by response bias. Further research should investigate the longitudinal impact of the peer-reviewing experience on future research skill development.

Conclusion

Students who participated in the near-peer review process found the experience valuable and helpful to improve their research skills.

The peer-review process is a potentially useful model to assist student research skill development.

References

1. Uigin DN, Higgins N, McHale B. The Benefits of Student-Led, Peer-Reviewed Journals in Enhancing Students' Engagement with the Academy. Educ. Res. J. 2015;93(1): 60-65. doi: 10.7227/RIE.0010

Contact

✉ Joanne.Wickens@hotmail.com.au



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