

Editorial

Paying It Forward: Peer Review from Both Sides of the Inbox

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As is the case for all medical journals, we have at times struggled to secure timely peer review of submitted manuscripts. Having experienced this both as an editor and an author, I am well aware of the associated frustration.

As an author, I do not think I have ever received so many invitations to peer review manuscripts submitted to a wide range of journals, including subject matters entirely unrelated to urology. Combined with solicitations for articles from both legitimate and predatory/pseudo journals, I regularly feel overwhelmed by these demands on my time. Even reading these emails takes time, and it is often easier to simply delete them unopened. Despite my substantial time commitment as the Editor-in-Chief of the *Société Internationale d'Urologie Journal* (SIUJ), I continue to perform peer review for other journals. I do this for several reasons, including an obligation to assist journals where I am a member of the Editorial Board, having a personal connection to the editor requesting my help, and, most importantly, the principle of paying it forward. As an author, I am acutely aware that I depend on others to review my own submissions. I will admit, however, that I have become considerably more selective, now only agreeing to review manuscripts that fall clearly within my current scope of practice or research and where I can commit to completing the review within the specified timeframe.

My own experience as an author fielding these requests has, if anything, tempered my frustration when it comes to sourcing peer reviewers as an academic editor. Having served as an academic editor with a number of journals for over 10 years, I suspect I am not alone in observing that sourcing timely, expert peer reviewers has, over time, become increasingly difficult. In the short time I have been the Editor-in-Chief of the SIUJ, the numbers of review invitations and acceptances have become increasingly challenging, as outlined in Table 1. With increasing difficulty to have acceptances to review manuscripts, greater numbers of peer reviewers must be invited which in turn adds to the numbers of peer review invitation emails. Delays in securing peer reviewers can inevitably add to processing times for manuscripts.

There is limited data on submission-to-publication times in urology journals, but one study found that time to publication was longer immediately after COVID than immediately before: from 2019 to 2021, time from submission to publication in print rose from 3.3 to 4.5 months [1]. This study cannot tell us the reasons behind this increase, whether it has been sustained, or whether it is related specifically to difficulty sourcing willing peer reviewers. The study was also limited to a small number of urology journals, leaving room for a urology trainee to undertake a more comprehensive analysis. Our own data from the SIUJ (Table 1) indicate that our submission-to-publication times are comparable, although our journal is published online only and by issue rather than through continuous publication.



Received: 17 August 2026

Accepted: 18 August 2026

Published: 20 August 2026

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Table 1. Recent *SIUJ* manuscript handling metrics.

	February 2026	April 2026	June 2026	August 2026
Mean reviewers invited (<i>n</i>)	48.33	17.44	13.38	19.08
Mean review invitations accepted (<i>n</i>)	27.59	16	16.37	5.17
Median submission to publication time (days)	141	89	52.5	89.5

Note: August 2026 data were collected 18 August 2026. *SIUJ*: *Société Internationale d’Urologie Journal*.

Based on my own experience, I do not think a survey asking authors why they are unable or reluctant to accept peer review invitations is necessary, as I suspect the answer is already known. A survey of corresponding authors to radiology journals found that the greatest determinants of accepting a peer review invitation were time and subject matter, cited by 62.1% and 57.8% of respondents respectively [2]. I would anticipate that a similar survey of urological authors would yield a similar result.

There are limited strategies available to increase author engagement in peer review. Life seems busier than ever, and there is growing awareness of work–life balance. Burnout among urologists is significant, and in my own opinion, this is a factor worth considering in why urologists have limited capacity to take on more [3,4].

Despite these challenges, we are making progress at the *Société Internationale d’Urologie Journal*. Overall, our manuscript handling metrics are improving, and as authors, you can rest assured that your manuscripts are being handled in a timely manner. The Best Reviewer Award is presented each year at the Societe Internationale d’Urologie (SIU) Congress, and a list of those who have peer reviewed for the journal is published in the final issue each year in recognition of their efforts. Our Editorial Board has also remained engaged and willing to perform peer review, contributing to timely handling of manuscripts. I wish to thank them and, as authors and readers, you as well.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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