Author's response to reviews

Title: Reviewer agreement trends from four years of electronic submissions of conference abstracts.

Authors:

Brian H Rowe (brian.rowe@ualberta.ca)
Trevor L Strome (tstrome@wrha.mb.ca)
Carol Spooner (cspooner@ualberta.ca)
Sandra Blitz (SandraBlitz@cha.ab.ca)
Eric Grafstein (egrafstein@providencehealth.bc.ca)
Andrew Worster (aworster@rogers.com)

Version: 5 Date: 10 February 2006

Author's response to reviews: see over
February 9, 2006

The BioMed Central Editorial Team  
**BioMed Central**  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7631 9921  
Facsimile: +44 (0)20 7631 9923  
e-mail: editorial@biomedcentral.com  
Web: [http://www.biomedcentral.com/](http://www.biomedcentral.com/)

To whom it may concern,

RE: “Reviewer agreement trends from four years of electronic submissions of conference abstracts.” for review by **BioMed Central**

Thank you for your letter dated February 7, 2006 regarding the decision by the **BioMed Central** to accept the above titled manuscript. We have reviewed the minor comments provided by two reviewers and are submitting the following final revision of the manuscript to the Editors. The reviewer comments were specifically addressed in the attached COMMENTS LETTER and changes made in the corresponding sections of the manuscript. All the changes in the manuscript are highlighted in **bold** print.

We would like to thank **BioMed Central** and the reviewers for their continued feedback on this manuscript. We hope that the changes we have made to the manuscript and the response to the reviewer’s questions complete this review process.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Brian H. Rowe, MD, MSc, CCFP(EM), FCCP  
Canada Research Chair in Emergency Airway Diseases  
Professor and Research Director, Department of Emergency Medicine  
University of Alberta
COMMENTS LETTER

General
The authors have greatly improved the clarity and focus of this paper -- however, I spotted a couple of minor points which could still be improved -- these are noted under discretionary revisions.

Author response: Thank you for this kind comment.

Major Compulsory Revisions: None

Minor Essential Revisions

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)
The quality of an abstract is typically DEEMED through the expert judgment of two or more independent reviewers. This seems odd wording -- I suggest DETERMINED or ASSESSED would be better.

Author response: Wording changed to assessed.

Each submitted abstract is assigned three independent reviewers from the bank of volunteer CAEP reviewers. One of the AUTHORS (CS) administers the review process and attempts to prevent conflict-of-interest situations during the reviewer assignment phase. On first reading, I took this to mean one of the authors of the abstract ... perhaps you could change this to read 'An ADMINISTRATOR (CS) coordinates the review process.'

Author response: Wording changed as suggested.

The pool of reviewers remained largely the same throughout the four years with the addition of several new reviewers in 2004. This is ambiguous -- either the pool remained largely the same, or it did not. Would it be more accurate to write 'The pool of reviewers remained largely the same through THE FIRST THREE YEARS, but several new reviewers were added in 2004'?

Author response: Wording changed as suggested.

Reviewer #2 (Karen Shashok)
General: The revised paper focuses more clearly on the objectives and findings of this retrospective analysis.

Author response: Thank you for this kind comment.

Major Compulsory Revisions:
The title should be amended to something like "Reviewer agreement trends from four years of electronic submissions of conference abstracts." Apologies for not catching this in the first round of review!
Author response: Title changed as suggested.

Minor Essential Revisions:
1. Abstract, Methods. The second sentence should be edited to read something like
"Reviewers used an on-line form specific for each type of study design to score
abstracts..."
Author response: Wording changed as suggested.

2. Background, para 2, first sentence. Change to: "The goal of abstract review is to screen
for submissions that are acceptable for inclusion in a conference program (in contrast to
manuscript review, in which the abstract is checked to ensure that the content of the full
text is accurately represented."
Author response: Wording changed as suggested.

3. Background, last para. "Based on this, the purposes of this investigation were to..."
This sentence should be rewritten for clarity. What does "this" refer to? "This
hypothesis", perhaps?
Author response: Wording changed to: The purpose of this investigation was to:

4. Methods, next-to-last para. near the top of page 9, "which occurs when assessments are
numerically equal (10,11). This phrase should be rewritten to clarify the meaning of
"numerically equal". Readers unfamiliar with ICC calculations will have trouble
understanding this sentence as it is written now.
Author response: Wording changed to: Computed ICC values range from –1 (perfect
disagreement) to +1, which occurs when assessments are in perfect agreement10,11

5. Discussion, Conclusions. The sentence "Results from this investigation suggest that
over the last four years an electronic abstract submissions and review program has
generated moderate agreement..." should be edited to mention specifically "the on-line
conference abstract submission and peer review system developed by the CEAP Research
Committee" instead of "an electronic abstract submissions and review program".
Author response: Wording changed to: Results from this investigation suggest that over
the last four years the on-line conference abstract submission and peer review system
developed by CEAP has...

6. Discussion, Conclusions. The sentence "The goal of this, and other similar studies,
should be to ensure that scientific merit is recognized and rewarded" is out of place in
this paragraph. There is little connection between this broad policy-oriented statement
and the rest of the text, and the study was not designed to test this proposal, so the
statement should be deleted.
Author response: Sentence deleted.