Author’s response to reviews

Title: Guidelines for open peer review implementation

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Version: 1 Date: 20 Dec 2018

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20th December 2018

Elizabeth Wager

Research Integrity and Peer Review

https://researchintegrityjournal.biomedcentral.com/

Response to reviewers for submission to Research Integrity and Peer Review - RIPR-D-18-00021 -

Dear Dr. Wager,

We here resubmit our article “Survey on Open Peer Review: Attitudes and experience amongst editors, authors and reviewers”. We wish to thank you and your reviewers for the very helpful comments provided, which have undoubtedly assisted us in improving the manuscript.

Below we detail our responses to each of the points made by the reviewers in their written reviews. Reviewer 1, especially, made some very demanding requests for changes. We have
sought to accommodate these wherever possible. We sincerely hope these revisions mean our paper meets your criteria for publication, but would be receptive to any further guidance you have for improvements.

Sincerely,

Tony Ross-Hellauer and Edit Gorogh

### Reviewer 1 ###

R1: Please use COREQ reporting guidelines and describe your methodology in full - how many themes and who identified them based on the notes and transcripts - have any been left out of the recommendations and why. Please also specify why notes or transcript of the meeting are not available in supplementary materials as well.

• Authors: We have now more fully described our methods in Section 5 to include the information requested. We include a COREQ check sheet to indicate where all the relevant information can be found in the manuscript. We have also now made data collected, as well as workshop materials and notes, publicly available via Zenodo and added a note of this under the "Availability of Data and Materials subheading": https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2301842

Abstract - Although the advice is directly mainly at editors - add aimed

• Corrected

Background - The second and third paragraph is a too long description of the authors already published work - It would be better to summarize it in only 1 sentence and direct the author to that publication, instead of repeating the points here in such length.

• We have now revised the background section to more briefly summarise the authors published work.
There have been many other studies and surveys on open peer review and they should be given the same amount of importance in the introduction as the authors own work, here I name a few: "Blinding in peer review: the preferences of reviewers for nursing journals Nurse editors' views on the peer review process Costs and Benefits of Reviewer Anonymity: A Survey of Journal Editors and Manuscript Reviewers OpenAIREF Survey on Open Peer Review Survey on open peer review: Attitudes and experience amongst editors, authors and reviewers Who and why do researchers opt to publish in post-publication peer review platforms? - findings from a review and survey of F1000 Research Report on ACL Survey on Preprint Publishing and Reviewing"

• We have now revised the background section to include more details of other studies and surveys on open peer review.

In section 4, please provide references for those qualities of peer review you state it has, it would be beneficial to cite at least some of the 5 sys. Reviews of peer review that have been published so far. Having said that, I do not see the purpose of this paragraph at all, if, as stated in the abstract the main aim is to report findings from the stakeholder workshop, and provide guidance on implementation. I leave the decision to the editor, but would remove this section of the paper. And again, it reports on authors previous work. And therefore, mentioning authors name in third person seems inappropriate, rather state, as I (we) previously shown, suggested.

• Regarding the relevance of this section, we respectfully disagree with the reviewer here - we believe this section is valuable in giving context to the benefits and drawbacks of the various types of open peer review (which information is obviously of use for those deciding whether and how to implement such systems). We have added appropriate references to the literature. References to author's previous work and use of 1st or third person seems a matter of style and personal taste. We prefer third person and have hence left them for now; if the editor wishes such references to be otherwise, we have no objections however.

In section 5 methods and aims - The guidelines seek to be of use to those who oversee the peer review of manuscripts for publication who are considering introducing more transparency or inclusivity to their peer review processes by implementing any of the innovations grouped under the term "open peer review". Should be moved to end of section 1 introduction, while the text after it omitted.

• Moved this text to end of the background section
Please provide sufficient details explaining the coding process of the answers, as well as the drafting of the first and later versions of recommendations, and how were the 3 questions transformed into 7+ recommendations.

• Detailed descriptions of these processes have now been added to Section 5 - Methods

Section 6.1. I would highly recommend the authors to provide a list or several examples, they themselves would use, on where those interested should look into the aspects they mention. Additionally, a supplementary table of such resources could be a great addition to the paper.

• References to specific background literature is given in various places within the text, and we link back to the specific section where many can be found. In addition, we have taken the reviewer’s very good advice and included a separate supplementary document of resources and background reading.

Please refrain from making statements like "will really help." Unless you provide (cite) studies that prove such actions help in the case of peer review.

• Corrected

"Consider starting with particular disciplines" Seems to be aimed at publishers of more journals, or interdisciplinary ones, please rephrase to be adaptable to even editors of single journals.

• Qualified the statement with "If you are a publisher overseeing peer review at many journals," - as the advice is to choose disciplines/journals, the advice would not be applicable to those editing only one journal.

Section 6.3. - "It seems that researchers are far more favourable to the idea of open content of reports than open identities" - Please provide citations for this statement, also in light of some of the surveys I suggested above.

• As part of the re-organisation and editing, this statement has now been removed.

I would recommend the authors to reconsider their recommendation 6.3. in light of their aims - If the goal is implementation of OPR, as stated in 6.1. then a remark about possible compromise is
better incorporated there, with the sentence on what aspect of OPR they want to implement, rather than including it as a separate recommendation.

• We respectfully disagree with the reviewer here - the point is that editors and publishers should consider their goals, then research the models which can achieve this and the technologies/costs involved, and then (this point) prioritise and think pragmatically based on how much they think can be achieved (how quickly)

Furthermore, 6.5. seems just a different approach of 6.2 I would recommend merging them.

• We have rephrased this point from "Sell the concept" to "Further communicate the concept" - the point being the first stage communication is needed to sound out the community on the ideas - this stage is to push the implementation. These are separate stages, conceptually as well as temporally, and in our opinion deserve to be treated separately.

## Reviewer 2 ##

Produce the guidelines in the form of a downloadable checklist, perhaps with a way of indicating how feasible each approach is at the specific journal. A flowchart might also be another way to present the information.

• This is an excellent suggestion - we have created a checklist as suggested and included it as a table in the manuscript.

I think it would be worth trialing these guidelines themselves and then aiming for a revision after feedback is received - basically following a more formal process for guideline development - as the EQUATOR network recommends for example.

• This is an interesting suggestion, but we are not convinced of the added-value this would bring, given that the guidelines are already based on the combined experience of many leading experts and practitioners in this field. In any case, we feel this more formal process of trialling is not practicable within the scope of the current study. We have, however, mentioned this as one of the limitations of the study.
There is not enough discussion of interdisciplinary differences. In my experience discipline is the biggest determinant of uptake, with the humanities having specific concerns.

- We have now added in more references to interdisciplinary issues - for instance that humanities have more tradition of double-blind and might hence be resistant to innovations like open identities.

Figures – eg. screenshots of examples would help to illustrate who has already adopted the ideas in the paper

- Screenshots have been added.

There are a number of typos throughout the manuscript, so it needs a close read for these. There are also places where URLs are given for some examples, but not for others.

- Typos corrected & added missing urls

P1 line 21 It would be worth talking more about the very early history of open peer review - especially at the BMJ and the BMC Medicine which were the leaders in this and which have the most experience

- Added references to the early history of OPR

P2 line 1 "Fringe elements" - I'm not sure this is right term

- Adapted language to "less central elements"

P3 line 59 Did the background research include a formal literature review? The methodology for the research, including search terms, needs to be stated.

- The background did not include a formal literature review - clarified this within the text.

P3 Line 60 What form did the "expert interviews" take?

- Added description in methods section
P2 "Peer review serves to validate the soundness, substance and originality of a work, to assess and help improve it until it meets required standards for these criteria, as well as sometimes to select for "appropriateness" or "fit" for certain venues." A better way might be to consider peer review as a form of QC - and then opening up aspects of it becomes more logical

• Added reference to "quality assurance" in the text

P 4 line 18 "Examine which particular aspects of your peer review process you would like to improve - for example transparency, participation, speed - and choose the elements of the process to open up based on this." I'd suggest this actually should be the first piece of general advice - ie why do you want to do this. Then listen to your research community is next. As noted above it may just not be appropriate at all for some communities.

• Advice taken and sentences rearranged.

P5 line 43 "It is important to note that there is no real evidence yet beyond anecdotal comments to demonstrate that either of these concerns hold." It might be true that most evidence here is anecdotal, but it is very well established that these concerns are very common. It is essential to deal with these concerns early on.

• Accepted - text corrected in line with this.

P6 line 31 "If you are keen to invite a specific person who is reticent, be ready to negotiate to persuade them (e.g., by offering more time to review)." I'm not sure how this would work as an incentive - and does raise the whole issue of how to properly reward those who review openly.

• This was mentioned by an editor for an open identities publisher - apparently some reviewers thought they would take longer to write the review - have amended the language to make this clearer. We agree on the issue of how to reward open review, but think that seems beyond the scope of this point.

P6 line 43 "A further issue to consider is whether the identity of the handling editor(s) should also be open. After all, at journals with very high desk rejection rates, editorial selection is also a form of peer review." This part needs clarification - all editorial letters have to be signed so in the vast majority of cases editors' identified are already open. Do you mean on the published report? If so, some journals do this already (at least for academic editors).
• On reflection, this sentence was removed as it introduced an unrelated issue which was not directly relevant to the current point and would interrupt the flow to treat in detail.

P6 line 54 "Finally, wherever reviewer names are disclosed along with publication, be sure to use identifiers (e.g., ORCID) to link that activity to reviewer profiles and further enable credit and career evaluation." The importance of ORCID is almost a throw away comment - it would be an opportunity to note that persistent identifiers are a really key part of current publishing practices and include it in best practices specifically

• Added sentence "Assigning persistent identifiers is a crucial element of best practice within current publishing practices."

P7 line 23 "any interested members of the scholarly community" Actually can be anyone - does not have to be an academic

• Accepted - text corrected in line with this.

P7 line 48 "In any case, some mediation of the community will help to stimulate engagement." - This point is worth expanding on - this is not a trivial undertaking.

• Added text to expand on this "Such mediation could take the form of reaching out to potential commentators directly to ask them to comment, or highlighting conversations via other channels such as social media, to entice others to engage."