

Editorial

The JPET Editorial Fellowship: Opening the Blinds to the Peer Review and Editorial Process

In January 2023, our *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (JPET)* launched the *JPET* Editorial Fellowship program. As described by Beverley Greenwood-Van Meerveld, editor of *JPET*, the program is one of the new initiatives launched at *JPET* to assist with addressing the needs of our pharmacology community (Greenwood-Van Meerveld et al., 2024). The year-long *JPET* editorial fellowship provides an opportunity for postdoctoral fellows and early-career faculty members with relevant expertise in pharmacology and drug development to gain a behind-the-scenes look at the inner workings of our journal.

We launched this program to address the needs of our community. As the number of scientific journals within and outside the field of pharmacology has increased over the years, pharmacologists are asked at earlier stages of their career to participate in the review process. It is not uncommon for postdoctoral fellows and new faculty members to receive several invitations each year to review for journals or to serve as a guest editor. However, compared with the years of training spent learning how to perform cutting-edge scientific techniques and mentorship with scientific writing, there are few opportunities available for structured and direct mentorship in the editorial process. Here, we are addressing this gap with the *JPET* fellowship program.

The *JPET* fellowship provides a unique opportunity to assist our community in gaining valuable insight and skills regarding the editorial process. In January 2023, ten inaugural fellows (Fig. 1) were selected and received a year of direct mentorship from a *JPET* Associate Editor. During the fellowship program, a fellow meets frequently with an Associate Editor who serves as a primary mentor. These meetings are a time for the fellow and Associate Editor to connect and discuss aspects of the editorial process, manuscript review, or presubmission inquiries the Associate Editor is presently handling. Fellows also attend quarterly meetings with the other fellows to discuss the editorial process.

After the first cohort completed the fellowship in December 2023, our team put together general suggestions as to how editorial fellows can prepare for the *JPET* editorial fellowship and the expectations for the coming year (Fig. 2). Before starting the fellowship program, we encourage prospective fellows to read material on the peer review process, such as the five principles for better peer review (Allen et al., 2019). In addition, we encourage fellows to consider which Associate Editor may align best with their area of interest to serve as their primary mentor for the program. It is also beneficial to review and understand the scope and aims of *JPET* to establish a foundation as to whether a submitted manuscript is well-suited for publication in *JPET*. So, what are the elements a reviewer should look for when assessing a manuscript for *JPET*? When considering a manuscript, our fellowship team noted that very few tip sheets exist to guide a reviewer on how to provide a high-quality review for an editor to evaluate. Therefore, we arrived at key concepts important to consider when evaluating a manuscript for *JPET* (Table 1 and Fig. 3).

In addition to the elements for a high-quality review, our team examined the landscape of editorial fellowships outside of the *JPET* editorial fellowship. For early career researchers, there are few editorial fellowship opportunities and most are highly dependent on specific and niche research areas. What makes the *JPET* fellowship stand-alone is that our program is tailored to the field of pharmacology, in line with the scope of the journal. Similar to other editorial fellowships, the *JPET* fellowship runs ~12 months and serves mainly early-career scientists with relevant expertise. *JPET* is unique in that the fellowship offers eight to ten trainee positions annually, perhaps the largest offered by a journal. The general fellowship program structure at *JPET* includes pairing fellows with an Associate Editor, mentored peer review of

Address correspondence to: Dr. Eric R. Gross, Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative and Pain Medicine, School of Medicine, Stanford University, Stanford, CA. E-mail: ergross@stanford.edu

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E.R.G. is a consultant for Chiima Therapeutics and an Associate Editor for *JPET*. M.K.L., C.A.M., C.D.P., and F.R. were 2023 *JPET* editorial fellows.

¹M.K.L., C.A.M., C.D.P. and F.R. contributed equally to this work.
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Fig. 1. The 2023 *JPET* editorial fellows. Pictured in the top row are Mahmoud Salama Ahmed (Texas Tech University), Patrick Glassman (Temple University), Jace Jones-Tabah (Montreal Neurologic Institute), Mayur K. Ladumor (University of Washington), and Catharine Mielnik (University of Toronto). Pictured in the bottom row are Cristina Peterson (University of Minnesota), Nir Qvit (Bar-Ilan University), Julie Rageul (Stony Brook University), Freeborn Rwere (Stanford University), and Zhichao Zhou (Karolinska Institute).

manuscripts, participation in Editorial Board meetings, and attendance at the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET) annual meeting. The *JPET* editorial fellowship is unique in its approach as it allows for fellows to be part of a mentored program that not only includes typical pairing with journal editors to learn critical skills in manuscript review but also, due to its large cohort of trainees, encourages fellows to participate in collaborative projects that contribute to the journal (such as writing Viewpoints, generating review materials, and gathering/curating resources for future fellows). These additional editorial activities help generate well-rounded participants of the editorial process, engaging a future generation of thoughtful and critical manuscript reviewers that will ultimately contribute to a more robust peer-review process discipline-wide. Thus, with respect to the editorial fellowship landscape, the *JPET* fellowship fills a much-needed role for pharmacologists to assist with mentored training regarding the editorial process.

Viewpoints, a new peer-reviewed article category, represents an opportunity for fellows to engage deeply with the scientific discourse within *JPET* (Greenwood-Van Meerveld, 2022). Viewpoints offer a distinct perspective on manuscripts recently accepted for publication, allowing authors to elaborate on existing challenges, conceptual advancements, or the implications of new innovations. This article category encourages the synthesis of current research with insightful commentary, aiming to stimulate broader scientific dialogue and understanding (Zambelli and Gross, 2023). As part of this initiative to enhance the fellowship experience, we plan to further expand into this area in the second year of the *JPET* fellowship. This expansion reflects *JPET*'s commitment to providing fellows with a platform to contribute their insights to important discussions in the field (Greenwood-Van Meerveld et al., 2024). In the same direction, some of our 2023 editorial fellows are currently engaged in the process of finalizing Viewpoints. Fellow

Advice for JPET Editorial Fellows

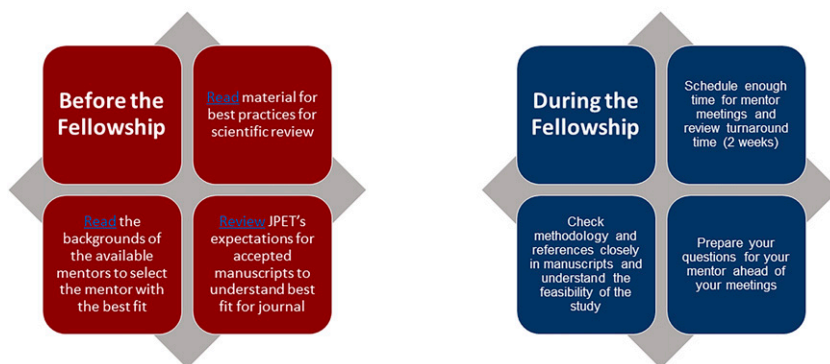


Fig. 2. Advice for *JPET* fellows with tips for before and during the fellowship program.

TABLE 1
Key elements for reviewing a manuscript and writing a manuscript review

Section	Description
<i>Summary</i>	Begin with a concise summary of the manuscript, highlighting the rationale behind the study and main findings.
<i>Overall strengths</i>	Outline the manuscript's major strengths, including its potential impact on the field, unique contributions and how the research advances scientific understanding or application.
<i>Major concerns</i>	List significant issues that need addressing, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract lacking elements such as a brief background, research problem, results, conclusions, and applications • Introduction lacking background on the topic, research problem, rationale, and objective for conducting the study • Unclear or unjustified aims and hypotheses • Lack of clear, reproducible methods or study design details • Results not clearly presented or lacking appropriate controls and statistical analysis • Insufficient evidence supporting the model or interpretation of results • Discussion lacking multiple viewpoints, study limitations, compare or contrast with existing literature, contributions to current knowledge, and future directions or perspectives • Conclusions not well supported by data or failing to address study aims • Lack of substantial contributions to scientific knowledge gap
<i>Minor concerns</i>	Detail less critical but still relevant concerns, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity and relevance of the title and running title • Inadequate details on subject selection and statistics for studies involving animal/human subjects • Adequacy and appropriateness of references • Manuscript structure or language issues affecting clarity • Whether acronyms are explained at first use • Self-explanatory figure and table legends and high-resolution figures • Adherence to submission guidelines and overall writing quality
<i>Comments to the Editor</i>	A concise summary of your evaluation, highlighting key concerns or standout aspects of the manuscript, including its quality, relevance to the journal's scope, and/or any ethical issues

participation in crafting Viewpoints is supported through mentorship by a *JPET* editorial board member, facilitating a learning experience aimed at fostering forward-looking perspectives, and critical thinking. This opportunity aims to equip fellows with the skills and insights necessary to navigate and contribute effectively to the scientific publishing landscape.

In the *JPET* editorial fellowship program, the selection process is designed to identify and nurture the next generation of leaders in pharmacology and drug development editorial work. Applicants are evaluated based on their scientific expertise, demonstrated through a publication record and relevant experience in pharmacology or drug development, alongside an expressed interest in scientific publishing, as detailed in their cover letter. *JPET* is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion and encourages individuals from underrepresented groups in science to apply. By requiring applicants to submit a detailed curriculum vitae and a cover letter by the December deadline each year, *JPET* ensures a transparent and equitable selection process.

We would like to thank ASPET for their support of this program. We are looking forward to working with our nine *JPET* editorial fellows for this year. We also encourage you to interact with our fellows at

Considerations for Peer Review

Relevance to <i>JPET</i>	Novelty	Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions of chemicals with biological systems • Original works <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of pharmacology and/or therapeutics • New insights on pharmacological mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplored Question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance • Originality • New Approaches and Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative • Broad Applicability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear • Concise • Informative • Experimental Design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous • Reproducible

Fig. 3. An approach to peer review at *JPET*. Critical elements considered during the review process of a manuscript have three domains: the relevance to *JPET*, novelty, and quality of the submitted manuscript.

the ASPET annual meeting and several of our fellows as they are presenting at the upcoming 2024 ASPET annual meeting in Arlington, Virginia.

 Mayur K. Ladumor,¹  Catharine A. Mielnik,¹  Cristina D. Peterson,¹
 Freeborn Rwere,¹ and  Eric R. Gross

Department of Pharmacokinetics, Dynamics, Metabolism & Bioanalytics, Merck & Co., Inc., West Point, Pennsylvania (M.K.L.); Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology, Temerty Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario (C.A.M.); Department of Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology, College of Pharmacy, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota (C.D.P.); and Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative and Pain Medicine, School of Medicine, Stanford University, Stanford, California (F.R., E.R.G.)

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