

Rapid publishing in the era of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

IN REPLY: Lee and Lin raise an important point about the need for caution in interpreting rapidly published articles in the era of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). At the *Medical Journal of Australia*, we are acutely aware of the need to balance rapid dissemination of key data with the need to maintain our usual high standards of quality and accuracy. We have taken the view that in these

unprecedented times, rapid sharing of information is critical, but we recognise the risk of errors this infers. In response, we have implemented a preprint and rapid review process for selected manuscripts of an urgent nature (*Box*). In order to minimise the risk of errors, all manuscripts are carefully reviewed by myself, our team of experienced and medically qualified editors and, where appropriate, our consultant biostatistician, before being selected for preprint in the *MJA*. Only where the editorial team have a high level of confidence in the validity and importance of the article will it be

selected for rapid preprint publication. Before full acceptance of the manuscript to be published online and in print and, in selected cases, before we accept an article for preprint, we organise a rapid independent peer review followed by revision in line with our usual stringent processes. In these circumstances, we endeavour to have this process completed within 7 days of preprint publication so that any errors can be quickly identified and corrected. We are very grateful to our reviewers who have been very generous in their assistance with this new process. One final check in our process on full publication is

MJA process for rapid publication of selected coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)-related manuscripts*

1–7 days

Author submits COVID-19-related manuscript

Initial rapid review by medical editor

Rapid review by Editor-in-Chief

Rapid review by biostatistician (if appropriate)

Preprint posted online at mja.com.au

Independent peer review

Re-review by editorial team and revision

Acceptance for Journal publication

Scientific and structural editing

Online-first publication

Print publication

7 days

3–4 weeks

Variable

* Timing is indicative and may vary according to the complexity of the manuscript. ♦

review and editing by our experienced scientific and structural editors, who meticulously check all articles for consistency, accuracy and referencing, while finessing them for readability and clarity of presentation — their expertise is invaluable in ensuring published manuscripts are presented accurately and in the best possible light. We acknowledge that contradiction and error may be inevitable during

this rapidly evolving situation but would like to assure our readers that at the *MJA*, when errors occur, they will be rectified in a timely manner and with full transparency. While we are living in a world of rapid change, our commitment to providing Australian health and medical researchers, clinicians and policy makers with the world-leading general medical journal they deserve stands strong.

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Competing interests: Nicholas Talley is Editor-in-Chief of the *Medical Journal of Australia*. A complete list of disclosures is available at <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/staff/editor-chief-professor-nick-talley>. ■

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