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Moderator: Our next speaker is Chancellor Brian Strom. He'll be speaking today in his capacity as Editor in Chief of the journal Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety, and will share his view of a journal editor. Thank you. BRIAN STROM: Thank you Judy. While she's doing that. Thank you for that excellent talk, and by the way, coffee is good for you -- as

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an addict myself. As everyone goes for their coffee in the background. Those of you in the audience know me and my administrative role. I wanted to spend just a couple of minutes to give you a sense of the biases I come from an academic point of view, because here I'm speaking from an editor's perspective. Obviously, I am Chancellor, Executive Vice President. I was from Penn before, and other things that you may or may not know

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about. I've been an editorial consultant to multiple different journals, referee for multiple journals, lots of editorial positions, co-authorships papers and so on. So, we have a lot of experience with publication. I'm also editor of a book. This is its fifth edition. We're now working on the sixth edition. I'm also Editor in Chief of Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety, which is what I'll be talking about today.

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This is the official journal of the International Society for Pharmacoepidemiology. Publishes paper on drug safety, risk management, and comparative effectiveness research. My goal as Editor in Chief is to develop the journal into the premier journal for the field in the world. I think we've succeeded in that, at least as one judge of that, one measure of that, is that the number of predatory journals that are trying to copy us now -- and we'll talk later in the symposium about predatory journals. My primary role as

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as Editor in Chief is to determine policy and decide the papers that are going to be published in the journal, and parenthetically, it's not an Elsevier journal, it's a Wiley journal. Journal publishers' duties -- I want to differentiate now between the publisher's duties and the editor's duties. The publisher's duties are: journal production; publication dissemination; including typography; format; frequency of publication; style; typesetting; proofreading; copy-

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editing; formatting; preparing electronic files; Internet hosting; printing; sales; distribution; subscriptions; marketing; advertising; editing; altering; or adding to contributions. There's a lot that the publisher does and you just heard about some of it. The editor's role is different. The editor's role is to promote scholarship within the field associated with the journal, to promote the journal as the leading publication in the field. They uphold the standards and protect the scholarly integrity of the journal and

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talking about conflicts of interest. We can really talk more about that if people are interested, in the discussion period, because I think we actually have a little bit of a different view of that than a lot of other journals, and to protect the confidentiality of the authors' work. In addition, the journal editor establishes editorial policy, defining the scope and aims of the journal, decides procedures and standards for the acceptance of manuscripts, and selects an editorial board. The

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editorial board in turn, advises on editorial policy and assists in soliciting and reviewing contributions. Journal editors' duties include soliciting the submission of high-quality contributions and inviting review articles, selecting supplements -- this is obviously in addition to what may come in over the transom -- evaluating submitted contributions in accordance with editorial policy, adhering to ethical principles and best practices, and

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monitoring copy flow. We want to adjust, and I'll show you a little bit of data, how selective we want to be based on the copy flow that we're getting. So there's the editorial decision and you saw a similar discussion before. Accepted, revised, rejected, or maybe most commonly shred, burn, and scatter the ashes to the Four Winds. Part of what the editor does is arrange for and supervise an independent, objective and unbiased peer

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review process. That is assuming it is a peer review journal, not all journals are peer reviewed journals. But assuming it's a peer review journal like ours, our research articles are reviewed typically by at least two (2) qualified experts. All decisions are made by the journal editors, and I say questioned on the basis of the reviews provided. My reason for doing that is, there are journals that use the peer reviewers as decision makers, and based on what the peer reviewers say, the editor makes the decision. We

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do not feel that way. We have as editors and associate editors and regional editors -- I will describe in a second -- people who are experts in the field. Our decisions are made based on by ourselves as editors and we use the peer reviewers as consultants. There are certainly papers that, where the peer reviewers have recommended "accept" and we reject them. There are certainly papers with the peer reviewers have recommended "reject" that we accept them. There are actually very few papers we have ever accepted without peer review. I think only

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my editorial comments. But different journals are different that way, and that very much affects the timeline issues that you heard about before. There was a paper once in my own experience as an author that a journal in our field --and not pharmaco-epi but clinical epi -- that always uses the peer reviewers as the decision makers, and that means each time you submit it, it goes for review again. At one point I got papers from this journal as

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peer reviewer three (3) or four (4) separate times. First time I sent it back, going "Here are substantive responses," and in our journal almost never send it to peer reviewers; the second submission, when it was submitted, revised and re-submitted. But occasionally we do, but this journal always does. So, they sent it back to me for review as a peer reviewer and I said 'Well, I still have these significant problems, but they've handled

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a lot of it. And here's some minor suggestions in addition." Then I got back a third time and the third time my comment back to them was, "They've done all they can do. If I were the editor on this paper, I wouldn't accept it. But that's up to you to decide." What they did is, they accepted the paper and made that statement to the publisher; that one of the peer reviewers felt it. I was amazed by this whole process. In the meantime, it took a year for the for the author, because it kept going back to

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peer reviewers again and again. That process issue was very important to the issue of timing and how long it takes for papers to be accepted. Again, our policy is peer review once typically, unless it's very specialized and you need advice. The peer reviewers are consultants and we as editors make the decisions. The editor decides whether a submission reports well conducted research with conclusions supported by the data in the paper, and the paper must make

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either an incremental or novel addition to the literature. If it's nothing new, we don't want it. Obviously the more novel it is the more interesting is. That's peer review. One of the roles of the editor is ensuring timely submission of the final contributions, form content and style satisfactory to the publisher. You want to make sure that in fact there's

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through-put, that the papers are coming through. We have a system and I'll describe it to you, with multiple regional letters and associate editors. One (1) of things I know have to do is delegate. We need to make sure that people continually respond; that things don't get caught up. I can tell you, at least in our experience, the slowest part of the process for acceptance is revision of the paper. We will respond much more quickly, give it back to

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the author, and the author takes much longer to respond for revision than otherwise. Second slowest part is the peer review and getting adequate peer reviewers. So, our structure: I'm editor in chief I have three (3) regional editors, Evan LeRake is the current Regional Editor who just took that position for the Americas. Our Regional Editor for Asia, Pacific and the rest of the world, B.J. Park, and Regional Editor for Europe is Bert Lufkin from

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Utrecht. We have forty (40) Associate Editors and a forty-two (42) member Editorial Board. Then the Editorial Board gives advice about policy [and] meets once a year. Our rejection rates are shown here for all submission types. [The Editorial Board] will meet once a year and there's a publishers' report, there's an editors' report; the

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next few slides come from this past year's editors' report. This shows you where our papers come from. About thirty-four (34) percent are in the U.S. The second biggest is the United Kingdom at six (6) percent, but we get papers from all over the world. If you look at, and I track these data now --exactly the table I'm showing you -- every month in order to keep track of it. We get about, ballpark, eighty (80) new submissions

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a month. This shows you R1s, R2s, R3s, R4s, R5, [and] R6; meaning R1 gets peer reviewed, gets sent back, and they respond back to us with a revision. R2 is a second revision. R3s we almost never have. They're very uncommon and typically they are very minor: change the title [of] this; change the wording of this; and so on. As you can see, there are no R4s, R5s or R6s. If we can't get it done after

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one (1) peer review, one (1) submission normally and sometimes a second, we say no. These are Accept/Reject Rates by Regional Office. As you can see, focusing on the rejection rate, it's pretty consistent, and I try to watch this. Of course, the regional offices do try to make sure that

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we are equivalently selective. For a while our European office wasn't as selective and we sort of push them to be more selective accordingly. As you can see parenthetically I reject one hundred (100) percent of papers. Those are the ones that I reject not sending them to the to the Regional Editor accordingly. This shows you our copy flow and you can see how it's changed over time. If you look at the top graph as the total. What has happened is so

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if we track this -- again, I look at this every month -- and each time we start getting too high, that we start having too much of a backlog, instead of pushing for more papers, we push for more selectivity. So that's why you see these waves. That each time we hit a peak, I've said to my regional editors, it's time to start being more selective and sort of reject more of the papers accordingly. That's been the pattern since I've taken over, is every couple of

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years getting very deliberately more selective. Early on we felt our role --ours is a small field -- we felt our role was to accept every solid, scientific paper that was submitted to us and we began to develop too much of a backlog. So we started getting more and more selective over time. Common reasons for rejection: submission not within the scope of the journal; the failure to follow journal guidelines; technical issues like study design flaws; incomplete data;

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inappropriate sample size; inaccuracies; poor analysis; inappropriate methodologies; conclusions can't be supported by the data or were not generalizable; insufficient originality, novelty impact, or advancement; salami science in terms of taking a study and trying to get too many papers out of it in terms of having too little in the manuscript; a lack of clarity [or] detail; poor structure; language quality (no narrative, boring reading). In general, we get

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papers from all over the world. When the English is bad, our publisher offers an opportunity for people to have help writing it. They have to pay for it of course. We generally don't send those papers to peer review, with a logic that it's not fair to them. They're going to get bad peer

review. They're going to get a bad review if, in fact, it's not well written. So, we send it back to them saying get a native speaker to be involved with you to help you rewrite it. If you don't have access to that, take advantage of the Wiley facility

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to help rewrite the paper. And finally, ethical concerns. Key: Choose a good research question. One (1) of the most difficult parts of learning how to do research is how to choose a good research question. My suggested requirements of the three (3) F's; that is number one (1) Focus, number two (2) Focus, number three (3) Focus. If you want to do good study, you have to narrow the question. You have to focus the question. As my trainees get tired of hearing me say, "The question is,

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what is the question? If you understand your methods, it's not hard to figure out the right way to do it. If you're having trouble deciding the right way, the answer isn't the struggle over methods, the answer is to narrow the question." Specific Aims. The hardest part of the research project is to develop the aims. Here [is] my recommendation of the three (3) I's: iteration, iteration, iteration. In going through planning a research proposal you need to go through endless drafts of the aims before you bother to do any

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thing else. That's long before your publication. If you haven't focused your question, if you haven't focused aims, you're not going to end up with a good paper. A paper has one primary message. You have to decide what that message is that you are delivering in a compelling way. Study Design: the response to any uncertainty about study design is to go back and focus the

question. Develop a research project. The key for conducting any research, again the question is what is the question.

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Other Information for Authors: very important to choose the right journal. You heard about that before. Where you aim too high, worse comes to worse you've wasted a little bit of time, but that's all. You aim too low, you could have had more impact. But it's amazing. For example, I typically get maybe once or twice a week, a paper submitted to our journal that's an animal study. We are a pharmacoepidemiology journal. We publish studies on

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large populations of people. Why is somebody sending to us animal papers? They clearly haven't read the information for authors. You are going to get rejected sight unseen and those are within my hundred (100) percent rejection. Review the author Guidelines for how to prepare the submission. There's a style guide, consistency of language, formatting, visuals, supporting information, acceptable materials, preparation of figures, and illustration.

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Parenthetically, make sure you are submitting it with the format of the right journal. Don't make the mistake I made once. I submitted paper to JAMA and part of the response back was, "When you resubmit please format it for JAMA not New England Journal." Tailor it to the journal. Nowadays that's more standardized than it was before years ago. As was just mentioned, submission typically implies that the material hasn't been published or

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submitted elsewhere except as an abstract. Here's our information for authors. Again, I won't read through the details but PDS provides an international forum for communication and evaluation of data methods and opinion in the discipline. This lists the areas that we are interested in. You'll find something similar in the instructions to authors for virtually any journal. Think about manuscript categories and requirements, and

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again this was alluded to before: original reports; reviews; brief reports; commentaries; research protocols. I can tell you from our perspective we publish mostly original reports. We publish some commentaries, most of which are invited in response to the paper. We do publish reviews that are submitted on their own, not only ones we invite. We haven't learned the game about letters. That was an interesting idea. We label

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them brief reports, so they do count against us from an impact factor point of view. Very rarely we publish research protocols only if it's a situation where there's going to be a wave of papers that are on the verge of importance that to follow and the point there is to put a stake in the ground that they have committed this is what they're going to do for the study. Conflict of Interest Disclosure; and again, we do something a little bit different than other journals, so we don't accept the

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international form -- the ICCJME form -- whatever it is, actually we do submit that on first submission just so it's not a barrier for people to submit. But then if they're invited to resubmit, we ask them to submit ours, because we ask for additional things. Think about keywords, key points, abstracts, any ethics approvals and research reporting guidelines. Let me stop there and I guess we will have questions afterwards.