

Process for Reviewing Papers from SGIM Official Activities Approved by SGIM Council October 3, 2014

The work of SGIM and its committees and task forces often produces manuscripts that are submitted for publication. Some of these are products of committees or task forces, some are from collaborations with other organizations around a specific topic, and some are policy or position statements developed on behalf of the organization. This proposal attempts to clarify the procedures and policies for 1) engaging Council during the development phase (if needed), 2) having Council review draft manuscripts intended for publication or other forms of public dissemination, and 3) expectations for review and consideration for publication of these manuscripts in JGIM.

Manuscripts will generally fall under three categories:

- Research papers
Some interest groups, committees, or task forces engage in formal research (e.g., Ethics Committee). (See Decamp 2014 for an example). This type of work receives support from SGIM (either staff or financial support), and this should be acknowledged. The papers should be shared with Council prior to submission for publication to approve the acknowledgement of SGIM support. This could be done expeditiously by the Executive Committee. Because these papers represent independent thought and work, the manuscripts would not be reviewed for scientific content. Any acknowledgement statement should therefore state that any recommendations in the paper (e.g., discussion section) do not represent the opinions of SGIM.

Sample statements:

The development of this manuscript was supported by the Society of General Internal Medicine. We wish to acknowledge the members and staff of the SGIM xxxxx Committee.

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When this work is submitted to a journal, the editors may want to know the role that SGIM played in the research paper. In this case, the authors might specify in the cover letter that there was no role of review or oversight of paper content from the SGIM Council, but support in the form of staff or financial support was provided.

- “White papers”

A white paper is an authoritative report or guide helping readers understand an issue, solve a problem, or make a decision. (See Chang 2014 for an example). These papers may make statements or recommendations that may be viewed erroneously as SGIM policy. Therefore, this class of papers should be reviewed by Council or a representative of Council (i.e., the Council Liaison to a Committee) prior to submission for publication to determine if there are statements or recommendations that may be viewed as SGIM policy. The Council will determine a course of action, e.g., acknowledgement of support, statement that the recommendations are endorsed by SGIM, etc. Because white papers will often make recommendations that are relevant to SGIM policy, committee/task force chairs and Council liaisons are encouraged to notify Council early that this work is underway.

Sample statement:

The development of this manuscript was supported by the Society of General Internal Medicine. The SGIM Council has reviewed this manuscript and supports the statements and recommendations.

If Council (or a representative) does not think that any statements could be construed to represent SGIM recommendations, then a simple acknowledgement statement may be requested if SGIM provided tangible support during the development process (e.g., developed by an SGIM committee).

Authors should be aware that if the manuscript is submitted to the Journal of General Internal Medicine (JGIM), there will be no special considerations because it was developed by an SGIM committee or because the recommendations were supported by Council. Such papers will undergo the regular external review process. JGIM will want to know what process the paper has undergone to receive the Council approval and the degree to which the paper represents SGIM official policy. This can be stated in a cover letter. White papers should not be submitted as official policy/positions of SGIM. If that is the goal, they are considered Policy/Position papers and should follow the procedure described below. Obviously, authors may decide to submit to another journal besides JGIM.

- Papers stating SGIM policies or positions
SGIM committees may occasionally want to develop papers to recommend policies or positions. (See Jackson 2014 for an example). Because these papers will always represent formal SGIM policy or positions, the idea for these papers should be discussed with Council prior to beginning work. The Council should support the concept of developing the paper and endorse that it is a topic that SGIM wants to take a position on prior to SGIM bodies beginning work. This usually will require direct discussion between the committee chair(s) and Council.

The group developing the statement should send initial draft recommendations to Council for review and discussion about whether modifications are needed.

Committee Chairs and the Council liaisons are jointly responsible for ensuring that the Committee/Task Force brings draft recommendations to Council early in the process. A full draft should also be submitted for review by Council, and a formal vote for approval should be held prior to submission for publication. Council will decide whether the position/policy warrants a period of open comment by the SGIM membership. The time period for open comment will vary from 2 to 14 days as determined by the Council. The Council will consider the responses of the membership prior to the submission of the paper for publication.

The title of the paper should include "... : a Policy Statement of the Society of General Internal Medicine." No general acknowledgement statement should be needed, although specific individuals (e.g., SGIM staff) should be acknowledged if appropriate.

JGIM should usually be the target journal for position/policy paper. The JGIM editors should be made aware of the manuscript prior to submission. JGIM would expect to work closely with the authors and have the paper sent through an "internal" peer review process rather than the usual external peer review (e.g. by asking the editorial board members to participate in the review) with the goal of improving clarity of the writing and the message prior to publication.

Authors may decide to submit to other Journals but a similar process of interaction with the Council should be followed whether submitted to JGIM or other Journals. JGIM and other journals would want to know the process in which SGIM Council was involved in developing the paper.

References

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