If peer review were a drug, it would never get on the market

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Hundreds of thousands of papers are published each year in the medical literature, and each year the number of papers published continues to grow. Publication in a “peer-review” journal is a core requirement for advancement in one’s career as a scientist, and since quality is often hard to judge, quantity (i.e., number of papers published) is a widely used metric.

The peer review system is supposed to winnow out work that is not suitable for publication. The system relies on “peers,” or experts, to examine a paper prior to publication, critique it, and offer a recommendation either for or against publication. In the scientific community, it is widely recognized that, like any system that depends on human beings, the peer review system is not perfect. Reviewers are expected to donate their time, and it can take several hours to critically evaluate a paper.

It is also widely recognized, and widely lamented, that a large proportion of what gets published is either wrong or simply meaningless. What to do about the problem is less clear.

However, it should be noted that the public is largely unaware of how the process works, and what it does and doesn’t mean. Even highly-educated non-scientists can assume, wrongly, that “peer review” means that the results of a paper have somehow been checked, or replicated, before it has been accepted for publication.

Read full, original post: The Crisis of Peer Review