

## MTN Manuscript Review Committee (MRC) Review Guidelines

### MRC review: Purpose

The purpose of the MTN MRC review is to ensure that all publications resulting from research conducted by the MTN or involving the use of MTN resources meet high standards of scientific quality and integrity. The MRC review provides an independent review after the thorough editing by the co-authors and the Protocol Publications Committee (PPC) for the related MTN study (if applicable). The MRC review should ensure the manuscript/abstract/presentation meets the standards of the peer-review journal/medical meeting. *Note: **accuracy** of reporting of study design and data analysis and interpretation are the primary responsibility of the lead author, co-authors and PPC members who have extensive knowledge of the study design and data.*

Additional responsibilities of MTN MRC review and MRC in general, to be provided by the MRC coordinator, are to ensure all MTN publications include the following elements:

- Standard MTN statement which acknowledges the MTN and NIH's support for the work and references the applicable NIH cooperative agreement number(s)
- Compliance with NIH policies, including the NIH Public Access Policy

### Who should be a MRC reviewer?

- The MRC reviewer should not be a co-author on the publication or a member of the PPC for the related MTN study
- If available, MRC reviewers should be MTN members with familiarity in the subject matter of the publication (behavioral science, pharmacology, contraception, virology, etc.)

### Guidelines to MRC reviewers

#### **MRC review should focus on the following components:**

##### **A. Content (Main)**

- Does the article/abstract meet basic scientific reporting standards as detailed below?

##### **If not, please provide comments to help the author improve major flaws.**

- Is the Research question clearly defined and appropriately answered?
- Are the data sufficient for reporting as an abstract or an article?
- Does the *Abstract* reflect accurately the content of the paper?
- *Methods* — adequately described? Is the main outcome measure clear? Participants — adequately described, their conditions defined, inclusion and exclusion criteria described?
- *Results* — do they answer the research question? Are they clearly presented?

- *Interpretation and conclusions* — are they warranted by and sufficiently derived from/focused on the data presented in the results section? Do they mention previous evidence? Is the Message clear?

## **B. Format**

- Verify that the publication meets standard medical writing practices and provides clear and transparent reporting.
- Provide minimal but key technical and grammatical corrections to improve clarity. For example, highlight flaws (and if possible provide suggestions to correct) such as incoherent sentences, poor grammar, inconsistent use of terms throughout the publication, no match between tables and text, etc.
- For Posters/oral presentations: Check if layout is sufficient to ensure clarity. If possible, provide minor technical and grammatical corrections to improve clarity.

## **C. Others**

- Ensure target journal or meeting selection is appropriate (ie, suggest other target journal/meeting if reviewer feels the publication will not meet the scope and main criteria of the selected target journal/meeting)

### **MRC review should NOT focus on the following components:**

- Writing style
- Elements that are generally related to a journal's peer-review process:
  - Importance and originality of the publication (i.e., relevance to existing literature, does the work add enough to what is already in the published literature, etc.)
  - Strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript/abstract