Peer review of the submitted manuscript is the most substantial practice which scrutinizes its potential and scientific merit. In general, the review process of majority of the journals involves an independent double blinded review of the manuscript by two or more reviewers. These reviewers are selected by the editor or editorial board of the journal, after reviewing their expertise in the research area of the submitted manuscript. These peer review times are often stretched over a period of few months. No wonder these long delays are often very frustrating for the researchers who are always competing for individual acknowledgement and scientific reputation. In 2008, a survey of 3,040 authors was conducted according to which, 38% authors were not satisfied with the time period of peer review process of their manuscripts [1].

Reviewers involved in the reviewing process are unpaid, therefore, it is logical to anticipate that the reviewers remain busy with their respective academic or clinical duties. Hence, their assistance in finding time to review the manuscript without any incentive is always valued.

The journals on the other hand, seem handicapped since the reviewers are not bound by any contract nor they are getting any benefit to return their review report in the designated time. Benjamin Franklin once said “Time is money”, and rightly so [2]. This quote mentioned here should not be perceived as addressing only financial incentives. Like all other people working globally are getting benefits for their services, the reviewers should also get some incentive for their services.

Where few journals provide their reviewers with an acknowledgement certificate annually, some publish a list of their reviewers on their website to recognize the services rendered to them by their reviewers. Some of the journals have started a process of awarding their reviewers with continuing medical education (CME) credits. One example is Saudi Medical Journal which offers 1 CME credit (approved by Saudi Commission for Health Specialties) to its reviewers for reviewing a manuscript, limited to 5 CME credits awarded per annum [3]. This should be considered a good practice where the reviewers are getting benefited, at least in some way.

The other debatable aspect is to offer the reviewers some financial incentives. Some scholars are of the opinion that the unpaid reviewing process already has its benefits like it helps to stimulate critical thinking, can be considered “service to profession” and can be used in the promotion portfolio. The others are of the opinion that like every other profession, reviewing should also be considered as a job and financial benefits should be provided to the reviewers. In a survey conducted in 2008, the respondents (more than 90% were reviewers themselves) were inquired whether the reviewers should get paid for their services or not. The results showed that 35% respondents believed that the reviewers should be paid whereas, 40% reported otherwise [4].

It should be also be considered that the clinicians all over the world have a monetary superiority over the researchers. Researchers are either only depending on their monthly salaries and/or are depending on research grants, which in most instances are very competitive. While many journals do charge a substantial fee in terms of processing of the manuscript, some of the journals do not charge anything. Therefore, there is no harm in implementing a small fee in terms of reviewing of the manuscript (reviewing fee) as the reviewers will be spending their valuable time to judge the scientific quality of the manuscript. The provision of financial incentives to a reviewer who returns the reviewer report in the allotted time will not only compensate his time, but will also ensure the publishing of high quality articles within proper times.
The reviewers act as a filter between the author(s) and the editor. They judge the scientific quality of the submitted work by providing unbiased feedback. It is therefore, suggested that steps should be taken by the journals to introduce some benefits for reviewers so that they can do their work with more zeal and interest.

REFERENCES