Background
Our journal's policy has been for editorial staff to format all articles, prior to editorial review, to ensure consistency with instructions to authors. However, over the last five years we have seen a 125% increase in submissions and a reject without review rate ~50%. We were therefore wasting editorial staff time (and author’s time) in formatting articles that did not get through editorial review.

Objectives
1. Develop a process where the editor-in-chief assesses all papers prior to any formatting to journal standards, and makes a decision to reject without review, or process for further editorial/peer review (we call this “triage”)
2. Investigate whether introducing triage resulted in decreased time taken to send new submissions for peer review
3. Measure time saved for editorial staff and authors in formatting initial submissions
4. Investigate whether we reduced our time to first decision with or without review

Methods:
On July 9th 2018 we initiated a triage step into our workflow (see Figure 1 for old and new workflow). All original research manuscripts submitted one year prior to this date (pre triage), and all manuscripts submitted one year after this date (post triage) were analyzed.

Editorial Office Checks Prior to Initiating “Triage” at Submission (takes ~ 20 minutes per article)
COI with ed board; cover letter and comments for anything pertinent; systematic review and clinical trial studies (require specific guidelines); conforms to word/figure limits; disclosure statement included; page numbers; figure quality.

New “Triage” Checks (Takes 1-2 minutes per article)
COI with EIC

Limitations
We use Editorial Manager for our submission system, but it does not have a triage workflow built in. Therefore, every day the PDFs of submitted manuscripts are downloaded and emailed to the EIC who indicates within 24 hours whether articles are to be rejected without review or formatted for peer review.

Medians, IQR and Mann-Whitney U tests are reported. Statistics performed using Social Science Statistics 2018 website https://www.socscistatistics.com/.

Results
Table 1: Number of manuscripts submitted before and after the introduction of triage

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Triage</th>
<th>Post -Triage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submissions</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>770</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formatting required</td>
<td>373 (50%)</td>
<td>174 (23%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Triaged</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>401 (52%)</td>
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When authors are asked to make formatting changes to their manuscript this takes on average 3.3 days.

Our editorial assistant spends ~20 minutes per article checking formatting. After the introduction of the triage step, our editorial assistant checked 50 fewer manuscripts for formatting thus saving 123 man-hours a year on this task alone.

Figure 2: Unsurprisingly, articles that are triaged are rejected without review faster than those formatted and sent to a sub-editor for assessment (about 0.5 days faster), p < .00001, Mann-Whitney U

Figure 3: Introducing a triage step however, slightly increased the time it takes to reject articles without review overall (~ 0.75 days), p < .00001, Mann-Whitney U

Figure 4: Gratifyingly, introducing a triage step did not increase time to first decision after review. In fact we saw a decrease in time of ~ 5 days. Note: we also changed our EIC during this time period p < .00001, Mann-Whitney U

Time Saved
Editorial Staff = ~30 minutes a day
Authors = 3-4 days per manuscript

Workflows:
Figure 1: Old vs new workflow with triage step.

Conclusions
Introducing a step to allow the Editor-in-Chief to assess all manuscripts for content, prior to editorial staff formatting for conformation to instructions to authors (triage):
• Allowed the faster processing of ~35% of articles that are rejected without review
• Saved editorial office staff time
• Saved authors time and allowed them to submit to another journal faster
• Resulted in faster time to first decision for all manuscripts; though did slightly increase the time to reject without review overall

Figure 5: Preventing articles from triaging reduces the time to first decision for all manuscripts; though did slightly increase the time to reject without review overall

Time saving and tracking methods could be improved if Editorial Manager introduced a triage workflow within the submission system: Editorial staff could then process all initial submissions within Editorial Manager and not take the triage step outside of the system to email.