

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH PUBLICATION

1: Originality, Plagiarism and Duplicate Publication

It is expected that the work submitted for publication is original, and no attempt is being made to pass off the work of others without crediting the source. Plagiarism may be unintended, but occurs when authors repeat, verbatim, sentences, paragraphs or sections without attribution by way of quotation marks and/or a reference to the original source. Plagiarism also extends to authors reusing identical portions of their own previously published works without reference to the source and such 'self-plagiarism' is also deemed unethical.

Authors should not submit manuscripts that are concurrently under consideration for publication in another journal or have already been published as a peer-reviewed publication. Duplicate submission and concurrent publication is highly unethical publishing behaviour. However, conference proceedings, project reports to funding bodies, institutional reports or unreviewed conference proceedings do not necessarily constitute 'prior publication', which would ordinarily disqualify a manuscript from publication in the journal. Nevertheless, manuscripts should indicate when significant aspects of the work have already been reported on in this way, and provide an appropriate citation.

Note: In order to protect the integrity of the journal, manuscripts submitted for publication are routinely screened to check for plagiarism and duplicate publication.

2: Conflicts of Interest

Public trust in the peer-review process and the credibility of published articles depends in part on how well conflict of interest is handled during writing, peer review, and editorial decision making. Conflict of interest exists when an author (or the author's institution), reviewer, or editor has financial or personal relationships that inappropriately influence his or her actions. Financial relationships are the most easily identifiable conflicts of interest and the most likely to undermine the objectivity and integrity of the journal, the authors, and the research itself. However, conflicts can occur for other reasons, such as personal relationships and academic competition. Editors may use information disclosed in conflict-of-interest and financial-interest statements as a basis for editorial decisions.

When authors submit a manuscript, whether a research article, editorial or a review, they are responsible for disclosing all financial and personal relationships that might bias their work. To prevent ambiguity, authors must declare whether potential conflicts do or do not exist.

All participants in the peer-review and publication process must disclose all relationships that could be viewed as potential conflicts of interest. Editors should avoid selecting external peer reviewers with obvious potential conflicts of interest. Reviewers must disclose to editors any conflicts of interest that could bias their opinions of the manuscript, and they should recuse themselves from reviewing specific manuscripts if the potential for bias exists.

3: Privacy and Confidentiality of Study Participants

Patients have a right to privacy that should not be violated without informed consent. Identifying information, including names, initials, or hospital numbers, should not be published in written descriptions, photographs, or

pedigrees unless the information is essential for scientific purposes and the patient (or parent or guardian) gives written informed consent for publication. Informed consent for this purpose requires that an identifiable patient be shown the manuscript to be published. Patient consent should be written and archived with the journal, the authors, or both, as dictated by local regulations or laws. Nonessential identifying details should be omitted. Informed consent should be obtained if there is any doubt that anonymity can be maintained. When informed consent has been obtained, it should be indicated in the published article.

4: Protection of Human Subjects and Animals in Research

When reporting experiments on human subjects, authors must state in the methodology section of their article that the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the relevant committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008 (5). If doubt exists whether the research was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration, the authors must explain the rationale for their approach and demonstrate that the institutional review body explicitly approved the doubtful aspects of the study.

When reporting experiments involving live animals, authors must state in the methodology section of their article that the institutional and national guidelines for the care and use of animals were followed.