

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), established in 1995, is a nonprofit voluntary association of editors of peer-reviewed medical journals from countries around the world who seek to foster international cooperation as well as education of medical journal editors. The text prepared by the WAME Publication Ethics Committee (© 2011 by WAME) is summarised in this article.

The editorship and the ownership of the journal *Pelvipiperineology* fully agree with the WAME publication on ethic policies.

“Publication ethics policies for medical journals”

The purpose of a policy on ethical principles

Medical journals aspire to select the highest quality science through a peer review and publication process involving important ethical principles and decisions, which are seldom explicitly stated and even less often shared with the readership. Journals' reputations depend on the trust of readers, authors, researchers, reviewers, editors, patients, research subjects, funding agencies, and administrators. A policy on publication ethics is summarized to encourage editors of journals to develop such policies and make them accessible in print or on the web to readers, authors, and reviewers.

Study Design and Ethics

Good research should be well justified, planned, and properly designed, so that it can properly address the research question, statistical issues being considered early in study design. Outcomes should be specified at the start of the study. Research should be conducted to high standards of quality control and data analysis. Data and records must be produced for review upon request. Approval from Ethics Committee should be required for all studies involving people, medical records, and human tissues, and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki should be followed. Informed consent by participants should always be sought. If not possible, an institutional review board must decide if this is ethically acceptable, the review board approvals being documented by the authors, or simply attested to in their cover letter. Animal experiments should require proper arrangements. Journal recommendations should be described in the Information for Authors.

Authorship

There is no universally agreed definition of authorship (guidelines have been developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, <http://www.icmje.org/#author>), and authorship roles can vary. All authors are responsible for the quality, accuracy, and ethics of the work, but one author must be identified who will reply if questions arise or more information is needed, and who will take responsibility for the work as a whole. The name of the writer and their sponsoring organization must be provided. Their names and contributions will be provided with the acknowledgments. Journals should discourage “honorary” authorship. Authors, and not funding sources, must have final say over the analysis and reporting of their results.

Peer Review

Peer reviewers are experts chosen to provide written assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of written research, to improve the reporting of research and to identify the highest quality material for the journal. They should be selected for their objectivity and scientific knowledge. There is no role for review of articles by individuals who have a major competing interest (e.g. those working for a company whose product was tested, its competitors, etc.)

Reviews will be expected to be professional, honest, courteous, prompt, and constructive. The major elements of a high-quality review should be: to identify and comment in a written communication on major strengths and weaknesses of study design and methodology; to comment upon the quality of the author's interpretation of the data, on any ethical concerns raised by the study; to provide the author with useful suggestions for improvement of the manuscript in a constructive and professional way; to provide the editor the proper context to make a decision on acceptance (and/or revision) of the manuscript.

Editors should make an effort to educate reviewers, assessing all reviews for quality; individual performance data must be kept confidential. The type of review process should be stated, such as the number of reviewers, blinded as to author or institution or not, authors blinded as to reviewer identity or not, etc. The submitted manuscript is a privileged confidential communication; if reviewers suspect misconduct, they should notify the editor in confidence. It is important that readers be able to readily determine which contents of the journal are peer reviewed. The journal should describe which types of articles are peer reviewed, and by whom (ie, only by editorial board members, by outside expert reviewers, or both).

Editors should strongly consider having a statistician review reports of original research that are being considered for publication. Journals should publish annual audits of acceptance rates, publication intervals, percentage of submissions sent out for external peer review, and other performance data. No reviews or manuscripts should be so used without the express written permission of the reviewer or authors, respectively.

Editorial Decisions

Decisions about a manuscript should be based only on its importance, originality, clarity, and relevance to the journal's scope, studies with negative results despite adequate power, or challenging previously published work, receiving equal consideration.

If a published paper is subsequently found to have errors originated with the author or the journal, the Editor is responsible for promptly correcting the written record in the journal, the correction being listed in the table of contents to be

linked to the article in public databases such as PubMed. Ratings of review quality should be periodically assessed.

Conflict of interest for editors is described under the proper section. The qualities sought in candidates to the Editorial Board should be described.

Originality, Prior Publication, and Media Relations

Journals should seek original work not previously published. Web and other electronic publication should be considered the same as print publication for this purpose. Republication of a paper in another language, or simultaneously in multiple journals with different audiences, may be acceptable. At the time of submission, authors should disclose details of related papers they have authored, even if in a different language, similar papers in press, and any closely related papers previously published or currently under review at another journal.

Presentation of medical research findings to the lay media can lead to their premature publication in the mass media.

Previous publication of an abstract during the proceedings of meetings (in print or electronically) does not preclude subsequent submission for publication, but full disclosure should be made at the time of submission.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of others' published and unpublished ideas or words presenting them as new and original. Self-plagiarism refers to the use, sometimes unintentional, of portions of previous writings of an author on the same topic in another of his publications, without specifically citing it in quotes. This violates the copyright that has been assigned to the publisher. If journals have developed a policy on this matter, it should be clearly stated for authors.

Advertising

Many scientific journals derive a substantial income from advertising or reprints or donations, creating a potential conflict of interest. Editorial decisions should not be influenced by advertising revenue or reprint potential. Limitations on how reprinted articles may be combined with advertisements or endorsements of a product or company should be explicitly addressed in journal policy. If supplements undergo a peer review process different from the rest of the journal, that should be explicitly stated.

Advertisements must indicate the advertiser and the product or service being offered, and in case of drugs, the full generic name of each active ingredient. Commercial advertisements should not be placed adjacent to any editorial matter that discusses the product being advertised. Ads should have a different appearance from editorial material so there is no confusion between the two. Similar limitations may include placement of ads for related products on the front, rear, or inside cover pages of an issue that carries an editorial or original article on that topic.

Products or services being advertised should be germane to (a) the practice of medicine, (b) medical education, or (c) health care delivery. Advertisements must not be deceptive or misleading.

Responding to Allegations of Possible Misconduct

Journals should have a clear policy on handling concerns or allegations about misconduct regarding authors, reviewers, editors, and others. Misconduct does not include unintentional error. The most common forms of scientific misconduct include: falsification of data, plagiarism, improprieties of authorship (inclusion of individuals who have not made a definite contribution, or multi-authored publications without the concurrence of all authors); misappropriation of the ideas of others (in scholarly activity fraud for improper use of information during the process of reviewing grant applications and manuscripts); deviation from accepted practices in proposing or carrying out research, improper manipulation of experiments, deceptive statistical or analytical manipulations; violations of applicable local regulations and law involving the use of funds, care of animals, human subjects, investigational drugs, new devices, or radioactive, biologic, or chemical materials; failure to report known or suspected misconduct (<http://ori.dhhs.gov/html/polanal2.htm>, <http://ori.dhhs.gov/html/publications/studies.asp>).

An example of a policy to respond to allegations of misconduct may be found in ori.dhhs.gov/multimedia/acrobat/masm.pdf, accessed 12/2/03.

Journals have an obligation to readers and patients to ensure that their published research is both accurate and adheres to the highest ethical standard. If the inquiry concludes there is a reasonable possibility of misconduct, the following options are ranked in approximate order of severity: a letter of explanation sent only to the person against whom the complaint is made, where there appears to be an innocent misunderstanding of principles; a letter of reprimand to the same party, a formal letter including a written request to the supervising institution that an investigation be carried; publication of a notice; formal withdrawal of the paper from the scientific literature, published in the journal, informing readers and the indexing authorities (National Library of Medicine, etc), if there is a formal finding of misconduct by an institution. Such publication will not require approval of authors. Editors or reviewers who are found to have engaged in scientific misconduct should be removed from further association with the journal, and this fact reported to their institution.

Relation of the Journal to the Sponsoring Society (if applicable)

The journal should have an explicit policy describing its governance and relationship to the sponsoring society. Editors-in-chief and the owners of their journals both want the journals to succeed, but they have different roles. The primary responsibilities of the editors-in-chief are to inform and educate readers. Owners are ultimately responsible for all aspects of publishing the journal, including its staff, budget, and business policies. The relationship between owners and editors-in-chief should be based on mutual respect and trust.

The guidelines for protecting the responsibility and authority of editors-in-chief and owners: editors-in-chief should have full authority over the editorial content of the journal, generally referred to as "editorial independence"; owners should not interfere in the evaluation, selection, or editing of individual articles, either directly or by creating an environment in which editorial decisions are strongly influenced; owners have the right to hire and fire editors-in-chief, but they should dismiss them only for substantial reasons incompatible with a position of trust.