



## **ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS**

### **Editors' responsibilities**

- To act in a balanced, objective and fair way while carrying out their expected duties, without discrimination on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, ethnic or geographical origin of the authors.
- Articles are considered and accepted solely on their academic merit and without commercial influence.
- To adopt and follow reasonable procedures in the event of complaints of an ethical or conflict nature. To give authors a reasonable opportunity to respond to any complaints. All complaints should be investigated no matter when the original publication was approved. Documentation associated with any such complaints should be retained.

### **Reviewers' responsibilities**

- To contribute to the decision-making process, and to assist in improving the quality of the published paper by reviewing the manuscript objectively, in a timely manner.
- To maintain the confidentiality of any information supplied by the editor or author. To not retain or copy the manuscript.
- To alert the editor to any published or submitted content that is substantially similar to that under review.
- To be aware of any potential conflicts of interest (financial, institutional, collaborative or other relationships between the reviewer and author) and to alert the editor to these, if necessary withdrawing their services for that manuscript.

### **Authors' responsibilities**

- To maintain accurate records of data associated with their submitted manuscript, and to supply or provide access to these data, on reasonable request. Where appropriate and where allowed by employer, funding body and others who might have an interest, to deposit data in a suitable repository or storage location, for sharing and further use by others.
- To confirm/assert that the manuscript as submitted is not under consideration or accepted for publication elsewhere. Where portions of the content overlap with published or submitted content, to acknowledge and cite those sources. Additionally, to provide the editor with a copy of any submitted manuscript that might contain overlapping or closely related content.
- To confirm that all the work in the submitted manuscript is original and to acknowledge and cite content reproduced from other sources. To obtain permission to reproduce any content from other sources.
- Authors should ensure that any studies involving human or animal subjects conform to national, local and institutional laws and requirements (e.g. WMA Declaration of Helsinki, NIH Policy on Use of Laboratory Animals, EU Directive on Use of Animals) and confirm that approval has been sought and obtained where appropriate. Authors should obtain express permission from human subjects and respect their privacy.
- To declare any potential conflicts of interest (e.g. where the author has a competing interest (real or apparent) that could be considered or viewed as exerting an undue influence on his or her duties at any stage during the publication process).

- All authors are obliged to provide retractions or corrections of mistakes.
- To notify promptly the journal editor if a significant error in their publication is identified. To cooperate with the editor to publish an erratum, addendum, corrigendum notice, or to retract the paper, where this is deemed necessary.

#### **Publisher responsibilities**

- Publisher shall ensure that good practice is maintained to the standards outlined above.

### **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR**

#### **Identification of unethical behaviour**

- Misconduct and unethical behaviour may be identified and brought to the attention of the journal's editors at any time, by anyone.
- Misconduct and unethical behaviour may include, but need not be limited to, examples as outlined above.
- Whoever informs the editor of such conduct should provide sufficient information and evidence in order for an investigation to be initiated. All allegations should be taken seriously and treated in the same way, until a successful decision or conclusion is reached.

#### **Investigation**

- An initial decision should be taken by the editor.
- Evidence should be gathered, while avoiding spreading any allegations beyond those who need to know.

#### **Minor breaches**

- Minor misconduct might be dealt with without the need to consult more widely. In any event, the author should be given the opportunity to respond to any allegations.

#### **Serious breaches**

- Serious misconduct might require that the employers of the accused be notified. The Journal's editors should make the decision whether or not to involve the employers, either by examining the available evidence themselves or by further consultation with a limited number of experts.

#### **Outcomes** (in increasing order of severity; may be applied separately or in conjunction)

- Informing or educating the author or reviewer where there appears to be a misunderstanding or misapplication of acceptable standards.
- A more strongly worded letter to the author or reviewer covering the misconduct and as a warning to future behaviour.
- Publication of a formal notice detailing the misconduct.
- Publication of an editorial detailing the misconduct.
- A formal letter to the head of the author's or reviewer's department or funding agency.
- Formal retraction or withdrawal of a publication from the journal, in conjunction with informing the head of the author or reviewer's department, Abstracting & Indexing services and the readership of the publication.
- Imposition of a formal embargo on contributions from an individual for a defined period.
- Reporting the case and outcome to a professional organisation or higher authority for further investigation and action