Research ethics for authors

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Ethical and legal concerns have proliferated among editors of journals published in English-speaking countries. As a result the number of documents and assurances that editors require from authors about the ethical conduct of research is increasing.
Noncompliance with these ethical requirements can lead to rejection of a submitted manuscript or retraction of a published article.

Noncompliance may be unintentional due to unfamiliarity with requirements or intentional, i.e., with the intent to deceive or mislead and give a false impression of compliance.
3 Areas:
- Plagiarism and good citation practice
- Secondary and duplicate publication
- Documents on ethics submitted with manuscripts
Part 1

Plagiarism and good citation practice

Guidelines for Avoiding Plagiarism, Self-Plagiarism, and Questionable Writing Practices

The following guidelines are taken directly from "Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing" by Miquel Roig.
Gatekeepers and readers need to know which findings, ideas and words are **original** (reported for the first time in this article) and which are **taken from other sources**.

**Acknowledge** intellectual debts.

**Give due credit** and priority are highly valued as a good ethical practices.
Plagiarism is defined by Western gatekeepers as re-use of words without appropriate citation. Western gatekeepers usually do not care why non-native English researchers use copy-and-paste to write manuscripts. They consider it plagiarism—a serious form of ethical misconduct.
Definition 1

Plagiarism = “the deliberate or reckless use of someone else’s thoughts, words or ideas as one’s own, without clear attribution of their source”.

Mason PR. Plagiarism in scientific publications. J Infect Developing Countries 2009; 3(1): 1-4
Two kinds of plagiarism are recognized in scientific writing: plagiarism of **data** and plagiarism of **text**. Editors and reviewers may suspect the authors of being dishonest about the scientific data, and may even suspect fraud.
“Falsifying the text may be an indication that data are also falsified. Editors take particular note, therefore, of repeated and extensive plagiarism in a paper submitted to them, because such an observation raises doubts about the integrity of the research being reported.”

Mason PR. Plagiarism in scientific publications. J Infect Developing Countries 2009; 3(1): 1-4
Definition 2
Substantial unattributed textual copying of another's work means the unattributed verbatim or nearly verbatim copying of sentences and paragraphs which materially mislead the ordinary reader regarding the contributions of the author.

Office of Research Integrity
http://ori.dhhs.gov/education/guidelines_to_avoid_plagiarism.shtml
Definition 3

Plagiarism is a form of piracy that involves the use of text or other items (figures, images, tables) without permission or acknowledgment. Deceit plays a central role.

Council of Science Editors
http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/editorial_policies/whitepaper/3-1_misconduct.cfm
Definition 4. **Translation plagiarism**

The institution’s legal department said it could not be considered plagiarism.

But **COPE** agreed that plagiarism does not have to be word-for-word the same, and plagiarism can be proven even in two different languages.

Committee on Publication Ethics
http://publicationethics.org/case/definition-plagiarism
Is cut-and-paste a good solution for writing problems?

Wikimedia Commons
Don’t copy and paste from other articles. The English may not be very good.

Many articles in an unreadable writing style are published even in top journals.

Vasconcelos SMR. Writing up research in English: Choice or necessity? Rev Col Bras Cir 2007; 34:1-2

would tell us that writing well can boost the authors’ chances of getting published. Even so, attention to language among scientists is still scant, which would account for the number of unreadable articles published even in top-tier journals. In a Letter published in the British Medical Journal 6, the author reports that “over the past 20 years…” many articles have shown “that medical information (such as journal articles, informed consent forms) is written in an ‘unreadable’ writing style.” Among the authors of such texts are NES researchers, as even those writing in their mother tongue can be poor writers. However, improving writing skills in the native
Conclusion:

Citations problems cause a negative impression on gatekeepers, can prevent acceptance of the manuscript, and may have additional negative consequences for the authors’ career.
How to improve citation accuracy and avoid plagiarism?

1. Avoid copy-and-paste.
2. Write or revise all the text yourself.
3. Insert provisional references (author-year) in the first draft.
4. Paraphrase (1 or 2 lines).
5. Always use “quotation marks” to enclose verbatim quotations (1 or 2 lines), and provide the reference.
Guidelines on how to improve citation accuracy and avoid plagiarism


Part 2

Simultaneous publication, Secondary publication, Publication in another language
It is **acceptable** to make the findings available to a different audience or readership, but

- copyright must be respected, and

- the authors’ intention to publish the same material more than once must be explained to the editors in advance.
It is **not acceptable** to republish the same study without telling the editors.

Duplicate publication is considered a violation of good publication ethics and can result in **retraction** of all published versions of the article.
The **authorship statement** is intended to prevent duplicate or multiple publication.

If authors intentionally mislead the editors, they may:
- retract the article or publish a notice of duplicate publication
- ask the author’s institution to investigate or take punitive action against the author


http://www.icmje.org/#over
III.D.3. Acceptable Secondary Publication

1. The authors have received approval from the editors of both journals.
2. The priority of the primary publication is respected by a publication interval of at least 1 week.
3. The paper for secondary publication is intended for a different group of readers.
III.D.3. Acceptable Secondary Publication

4. The secondary version faithfully reflects the data and interpretations of the primary version.

5. The footnote on the title page of the secondary version informs readers that the paper has been published in whole or in part and states the primary reference.
III.D.3. Acceptable Secondary Publication

6. The title of the secondary publication should indicate that it is a secondary publication (complete republication, abridged republication, complete translation, or abridged translation) of a primary publication. Of note, the NLM does not consider translations to be “republications.”
World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) guidelines
Publication ethics policies for medical journals; Originality, prior publication and media relations.

http://www.wame.org/resources/publication-ethics-policies-for-medical-journals#orig
Republication of a paper in another language, or simultaneously in multiple journals with different audiences, may be acceptable, provided that there is full and prominent disclosure of its original source at the time of submission of the manuscript.
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.
How can we avoid inadvertent duplicate publication?

Follow the ICMJE and WAME recommendations, and your national journals commission recommendations.

If you have questions, ask the editor.
Part 3

Good submittal practice to document good ethics

SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

☐ All abbreviations must be spelled out at their first use in the abstract, first use in the manuscript, first use in précis and defined in every table or figure legend in which they are used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Must be submitted with every manuscript:</th>
<th>Please check off additional material included:</th>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Corresponding author’s name and contact information</td>
<td>☐ Abstract exceptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ Disclosure of any conflict of interest OR blanket statement that no author has any conflict of interest.</td>
<td>☐ Prior/repetitive publication</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐ Request for waiver of any statement that should be in Methods and isn’t (IRB, HIPAA, Clinical Trial Registration, Declaration of Helsinki)</td>
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</table>
Ethical and legal concerns have **proliferated** among journals published in English-speaking countries.

The documents that must be submitted with manuscripts are intended to **prevent legal and bureaucratic problems for editors and publishers.**
They do not prevent all problems...

*JAMA’s new rule on whistleblowers’ silence during investigations creates controversy*

Tanne JH. JAMA’s new rule on whistleblower’s silence during investigations creates controversy. *BMJ* 2009; 338: 790

but may decrease the frequency of problems.
There are concerns that not all the information authors provide in these documents is accurate.

Errors arise from unfamiliarity with the journal’s expectations and requirements, carelessness, and occasionally, intentional deception.
Because of concerns about **ghost authorship**, experts in editorial ethics recommend that all persons who participated in the writing or editing of the manuscript but who are not authors should be named in the **Acknowledgments**.

3. **Acknowledgment Statement.** Authors should obtain written permission from all individuals named in an Acknowledgment, since readers may infer their endorsement of data and conclusions. The corresponding author must sign the following statement:

- I certify that all persons who have made substantial contributions to the work reported in this manuscript (e.g., data collection, analysis, or writing or editing assistance) but who do not fulfill the authorship criteria are named with their specific contributions in an Acknowledgment in the manuscript.
What documents need to be submitted?

1. Cover letter (statement of originality, summary of content, list of suggested reviewers, contact information, etc.)
2. Authorship form (signatures)
3. Conflict of interest disclosure
4. Copyright transfer
5. Manuscript checklist
What documents need to be submitted?

6. Randomized clinical trials: trial registration number, ethics committee (IRB) approval, informed consent, CONSORT checklist...
The Lancet Covering Letter

1. explain why your paper should be published in The Lancet—a leading international general medical journal—rather than elsewhere (eg, a specialty journal)

2. indicate what could shorten your paper—the full paper can be reviewed and a shorter version published
Annals of Emergency Medicine
Cover Letter

1. identify and briefly describe the manuscript

2. list the title of the article

3. identify the journal category for which your manuscript is intended
Annals of Emergency Medicine
Cover Letter

4. identify the corresponding author

5. indicate whether it is a randomized controlled trial or other standardized study type described below

6. provide full information about any form of prior publication
7. describe any situation that might be perceived as a **conflict of interest**

8. list any **copyright constraints**
Annals of Emergency Medicine
Required Submission Documents

1. Cover Letter
2. Manuscript Submission Agreement
3. Author Contributions Statement
4. Title Page
5. Abstract, Article, References
6. letters granting permission to the Annals office
7. an original hard copy of any figures you included
8. The CONSORT checklist (for RCTs)
9. Clinical Trials Registration information
10. Permissions for material published elsewhere previously
Annals of Emergency Medicine
Additional Required Documents

11. Photographs: patient’s signed release authorizing publication
12. Statement of clearance to publish
13. Written permission from any persons acknowledged by name
WAME Conflict of Interest Policy Statement  (http://www.wame.org/conflict-of-interest-in-peer-reviewed-medical-journals)

Conflict of interest exists when there is a divergence between an individual’s private interests (competing interests) and his or her responsibilities to scientific and publishing activities…
Conflict of interest

...such that a reasonable observer might wonder if the individual’s behavior or judgment was motivated by considerations of his or her competing interests.
Types of competing interests (WAME)

- Financial ties
- Academic commitments
- Personal relationships
- Political or religious beliefs
- Institutional affiliations
Types of competing interests (PLoS Medicine editors)

- Reimbursement for attending a conference or symposium
- Fees for speaking
- Fees for organizing education
- Funds for research or for a member of staff
- Fees for consulting
Types of competing interests
(JAMA)

...including financial interests: employment, affiliation, grants, funding, consultancies, honoraria, speakers’ bureau, stock ownership, expert testimony, royalties, patents

All potential conflicts of interest disclosed in the Acknowledgments section
Declaring and managing COI (WAME)

COIs are ubiquitous and cannot be eliminated altogether.

However, they can be managed constructively so that they make the least possible intrusion on journal content and credibility.
How will COI be managed by journals? (WAME)

- Publish all relevant COI disclosures with the publication
- Not consider a manuscript further
- Exclude reviewers or editors with COI from peer review or decision-making
- Investigate by impartial observers
Transparency and public accountability are valued.

When in doubt, check the ICMJE, WAME or COPE websites, consult your national journals commission, or ask the editor for guidance.
Thank-you very much for your participation.

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