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PUBLICATION ETHICS AND PUBLICATION MALPRACTICE STATEMENT

For all parties involved in the act of publishing [the author(s), journal editor(s), peer reviewer(s) and the publisher] it is necessary to agree upon standards of expected ethical behaviour. The ethics statements for our journal are based on the international best practice guidelines for journal editors.

1. ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS

1.1 Editors' duties and responsibilities

The editor(s) acts in a balanced, objective, confidential 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.

The editor(s) handles submissions for sponsored supplements or special issues in the same way as other submissions, so that articles are considered and accepted solely on their academic merit and without commercial influence.

The editor(s) adopts and follows reasonable procedures in the event of complaints of an ethical or conflict nature, in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Society where appropriate. The editor(s) gives 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.

In particular:

Regarding fair play

Submitted manuscripts are evaluated for their intellectual content without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnic origin, citizenship, or political philosophy of the authors.

Regarding confidentiality

The editor-in-chief and any editorial staff do NOT disclose any information about a submitted manuscript to anyone other than the corresponding author, reviewers, potential reviewers, other editorial advisers, and the publisher, as appropriate.

Regarding disclosure and conflicts of interest

Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript are NOT used in an editor's own research without the explicit written consent of the author(s).

Regarding publication decisions

The handling editor-in-chief of the journal is responsible for deciding which of the submitted articles should be published. The editor-in-chief may be guided by the policies of the journal's Editorial Board and constrained by such legal requirements as shall then be in force regarding libel, copyright infringement and plagiarism. The editor-in-chief may confer with other editors or reviewers in making this decision.

1.2 Reviewers' duties and responsibilities

The reviewer(s) contributes 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.

The reviewer(s) maintains the confidentiality of any information supplied by the editor or author. The reviewer(s) does not retain or copy the manuscript.

The reviewer(s) alerts the editor to any published or submitted content that is substantially similar to that under review.

The reviewer(s) is aware of any potential conflicts of interest (financial, institutional, collaborative or other relationships between the reviewer and author). The reviewer(s) alerts the editor to these, if necessary withdrawing their services for that manuscript.

In particular:

Contribution to editorial decisions

Peer reviewer(s) assists the editor-in-chief in making editorial decisions and, through the editorial communication with the author, may also assist the author in improving the manuscript.

Promptness

Any invited referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows that its timely review will be impossible should immediately notify the editor-in-chief so that alternative reviewers can be contacted.

Confidentiality

Any manuscripts received for review are treated as confidential documents. They are NOT shown to or discussed with others except if authorized by the editor-in-chief.

Standards of objectivity

Reviews are conducted objectively. Personal criticism of the author is inacceptable. Referees express their views clearly with appropriate supporting arguments.

Acknowledgement of sources

The reviewer(s) identifies relevant published work that has not been cited by the authors. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument had been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation. The reviewer(s) calls to the editor's attention any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published data of which they have personal knowledge.

Disclosure and conflict of interest

Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage. Reviewers do NOT consider evaluating manuscripts in which they have conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the submission.

1.3 Authors' duties and responsibilities

The author(s) maintains 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, the author(s) deposits data in a suitable repository or storage location, for sharing and further use by others.

The author(s) confirms/asserts 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, the author(s) acknowledges and cites those sources. Additionally, the author(s) provides the editor(s) with a copy of any submitted manuscript that might contain overlapping or closely related content.

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Authors 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 obtain express permission from human subjects and respect their privacy.

The author(s) declares 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 her/his duties at any stage during the publication process).

The author(s) notifies promptly the journal editor or publisher if a significant error in their publication is identified. The author(s) cooperates with the editor and publisher to publish an erratum, addendum, corrigendum notice, or retracts the paper, where this is deemed necessary.

In particular:

Reporting standards

Authors' reporting results of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed as well as an objective discussion of its significance. Underlying data should be represented accurately in the manuscript. A paper must contain sufficient details and references to permit others to replicate the work. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable.

Originality and plagiarism

The author(s) ensures that they have written entirely original works. If the author(s) used the work and/or words of others, this must be appropriately cited or quoted.

Multiple, redundant or concurrent publication

An author does not, in general, publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal or primary publication. Parallel submissions of the same manuscript to more than one journal constitute unethical publishing behaviour and are unacceptable.

Acknowledgement of sources

Proper acknowledgments of the work of others must always be given. Authors must cite publications that have been influential in determining the nature of the reported work.

Authorship of a manuscript

Authorship is limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be named in an Acknowledgement section. The corresponding author must ensure that all appropriate co-authors (according to the above definition) and no inappropriate co-authors are included in the author list of the manuscript, and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication.

Hazards and human or animal subjects

If the work involves chemicals, procedures or equipment that have any unusual hazards inherent in their use, the authors must clearly identify these in the manuscript.

Disclosure and conflicts of interest

All authors must disclose in their manuscript any financial or other substantive conflict of interest that might be construed to influence the results or their interpretation in the manuscript. All sources of financial support for the project have to be disclosed.

Fundamental errors in published works

When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in her/his own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal's editor-in-chief and cooperate with her/him to either retract the paper or to publish an appropriate erratum.

1.4 Publisher's duties and responsibilities

The publisher (McGraw-Hill Education) ensures that good practice is maintained to the standards outlined above.

In cases of alleged or proven scientific misconduct, fraudulent publication or plagiarism the publisher, in close collaboration with the editors-in-chief, will take all appropriate measures to clarify the situation and to amend the article in question. This includes the prompt publication of an erratum or, in the most severe cases, the complete retraction of the affected work.

The publisher does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, race, gender, genetic predisposition or carrier status, or sexual orientation in its publishing programs, services and activities.

2. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

2.1 Identification of unethical behaviour

Misconduct and unethical behaviour may be identified and brought to the attention of the editor and publisher 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 or publisher 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.

In particular:

Investigation

An initial decision should be taken by the editor, who should consult with or seek advice from the publisher, if appropriate. 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 editor, in consultation with the publisher or Society as appropriate, 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.