

ETHICS FOR AUTHORS

Integrity and scientific ethics: Authors are obliged to prepare a thorough presentation of their scientific work and to interpret their research results in an objective manner. Their papers should include the necessary information enabling identification of sources of data, and rendering it possible for others to repeat the studies. Presenting and interpreting data that is inconsistent with the ethical principles is unacceptable and may result in a text being withdrawn from publishing.

Studies involving people or animals must be conducted in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Helsinki Declaration) and with the Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council.

If materials containing data that enable patient identification are to be presented, the authors are obliged ensure their anonymization. If anonymization is not possible, consent has to be obtained (and submitted to the editorial board) from the patient whose image is to be used.

Originality of the work: Authors may only submit their own texts for publication. Studies and/or information obtained from other researchers must be marked as such, with clear references to cited passages. Plagiarism or data falsification is unacceptable.

Availability of data: If requested to present raw study results, used in their manuscripts, authors are obliged to make them available, also at a later stage, once their paper has already been published.

Authorship: Authors who submit multi-author texts for publication are obliged to reveal the contributions of the individual authors. All of the authors are held responsible for the content presented in the publication, and thus, they have to be familiar with the final version of the text, and grant their approval for publication.

Ghostwriting and guest authorship are manifestations of lack of scientific integrity, and as such should be reported to the competent authorities, including the institutions that employ the authors in question, as well as scientific societies, associations of scientific editors, etc.

Integrity of sources: Authors are obliged to include all the publications used in their work in the reference list.

Correcting errors in the published papers: If the authors discover significant errors or inconsistencies in their texts, they are obliged to inform the publisher immediately. The mistakes will then be corrected in the form of an erratum.

ETHICS FOR EDITORS

The editorial board of “OphthaTherapy. Therapies in Ophthalmology” implements standards of ethical conduct at all stages of the publishing process in order to ensure the highest scientific quality, and to counteract dishonest practices, including plagiarism and ghostwriting. Our actions are based on the guidelines of the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) as well as on the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), constituting a best-practice model for contemporary medical editors.

Editors shall select reviewers who have suitable expertise in the relevant field and shall follow best practice in avoiding the selection of fraudulent peer reviewers. The editor shall review all disclosures of potential conflicts of interest and suggestions for self-citation made by reviewers in order to determine whether there is any potential for bias.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITY OF EDITORS

Members of the editorial team (hereinafter referred to as “Editors”) take decisions on the acceptance and date of publication of a given manuscript. Their decisions are based on the submitted reviews. They act in a sustainable, objective and fair manner, without discrimination on grounds of gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, ethnicity or geographic origin of the authors involved.

None of the Editors may disclose information on the submitted works to any other person but the authors, reviewers, potential reviewers and other editorial consultants.

Editors are entrusted with the task of ensuring ethical conduct on the part of all persons involved in the preparation of the journal. The editor must not be involved in decisions about papers which s/he has written him/herself or have been written by family members or colleagues or which relate to products or services in which the editor has an interest.

The principles listed below are binding for all members of the Editorial Board as well as Guest Editors.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Editors must protect the confidentiality of all material submitted to the journal and all communications with reviewers, unless otherwise agreed with the relevant authors and reviewers.

Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used.

ETHICS FOR REVIEWERS

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

If you receive a proposal to review a manuscript, consider it thoroughly, whether you have the necessary specialist expertise, before you provide your final answer. Agree to it only when you are certain that it is the case.

If you feel unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or know that its prompt review will be impossible, please notify the editor and decline to participate in the review process.

IMPARTIALITY

A good review has to be impartial. Before you take the decision on accepting a manuscript for review, look into any potential conflicts which might impact your perceptions, including personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or religious conflicts. If you are not certain, whether a conflict is in place, report your concerns to the Editor.

If you suggest that an author should include citations to yours (or your associates') work, this must be for genuine scientific reasons and not with the intention of increasing your citation count or enhancing the visibility of your work (or that of your associates).

DATES AND DEADLINES

It is good to respond to a manuscript review proposal within a reasonable period of time, even if you are unable to carry out the review yourself. It will shorten the waiting time for publication. If you believe you have the necessary competences to review a particular manuscript, and there are no conflicts of interest, consider the timeframe proposed by the editorial team. If you believe that the time you have been given is insufficient, inform the Editorial Board about a more realistic deadline for the review. Always inform the Editors without delay, if your situation changes, resulting in your inability to deliver the review, or in a change in schedule. If you cannot perform the review, recommend other reviewers to the Editorial Board.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any manuscripts received are treated as confidential documents and must not share the review or information about the paper with anyone or contact the authors directly without permission from the editor.

Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in a reviewer's own research without the express written consent of the author. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be kept confidential and not used for personal advantage.

ALERTNESS TO ETHICAL ISSUES

You should be alert to potential ethical issues in the paper and should bring these to the attention of the editor, including any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper of which you have personal knowledge. Any statement that an observation, derivation, or argument had been previously reported should be accompanied by the relevant citation.

SPECIAL CASES

Suspecting plagiarism at the stage of manuscript submission

1. If the reviewer has any reservations as to the originality of the submitted work, the Editor puts further review process on hold, and enquires into the extent of the paper's originality once again.
2. If the enquiry reveals no problems, the Editor discusses the situation with the reviewers, and based on that exchange, takes decision on resuming the review process or requests further explanation from the authors.
3. If the recheck reveals that only short excerpts are repeated (e.g. in the discussion or summary of the current state of research, insignificant from the point of view of scientific quality, the Editor will ask the corresponding author to add adequate descriptions and/or references to the controversial fragments, or to have them redacted.
4. In a case of **blatant plagiarism** (use of extensive fragments of text and/or data without attribution of authorship, presented as if they were the plagiarizer's own contributions), the Editor contacts the corresponding author, and forwards evidence material to them, requesting explanation.
5. If there is no satisfactory explanation or if the author acknowledges their guilt, the Editor officially rejects the manuscript, informing the authors about the reasons behind the decision, explaining the journal's standpoint, and shedding light on adequate future conduct. The Editor may also report the situation to the authors' superiors or home departments (also informing the authors and reviewers about it).
6. If there is satisfactory explanation to be offered (e.g. lack of author's experience), the Editor informs the authors about manuscript rejection or need for editing the paper, explaining the journal's standpoint, and instructing the authors on adequate future conduct.

Suspecting plagiarism in an already published paper

1. Having received information on suspected plagiarism in an already published article, the Editor looks into the presented allegations.
2. If the extent of the copied material is small, e.g. only short phrases are copied (e.g. in the discussion part of a research paper), and there is no false attribution of authorship, the Editor contacts the author, expressing their disappointment in the situation, explaining the journal's standpoint, and discussing the conditions on which a corrected version will be published, including references to the original text(s), if they had been omitted previously. Afterwards, the Readers are informed about the situation.
3. If the extent of the copied material indicates that evident plagiarism is at play (use of large excerpts of text and/or data without authorship attribution, presented as if they were plagiarizer's own material), the Editor forwards plagiarism evidence to the corresponding author, requesting explanation.
4. If there is no satisfactory explanation, if the author acknowledges their guilt, or if there is no reaction whatsoever, the Editor may withdraw the controversial paper, informing the Readers about the situation. At the same time, the Editor shall report it to the author's superiors as well as to the editorial board of the journal/publishing house, from whose publication the plagiarized passages have been derived. Additionally, they may notify the public authorities of the offense.

Suspecting self-plagiarism at the stage of manuscript submission

1. Having received information on suspected self-plagiarism from the reviewer, the Editor checks the extent of repetitions with anti-plagiarism software.
2. If the extent is small, the reviewer is informed about it, and the review process continues.
3. If the extent of repetitions is larger, one has to examine, whether the repetitions are necessary and stem from the nature of work (e.g. a repeated description of the research methods), or not.
4. If they are considered necessary, the Editor should contact the corresponding author and explain the journal's standpoint, i.e. that secondary works should contain references to the original paper. The Editor should then request it from the author to include the missing reference in the original work and/or to remove the copied material. Afterwards, the review process may be continued.
5. If the extent of repetitions is significant (i.e. the paper is based on the same data that lead to identical or very similar results; or there is evidence that authors attempted at concealing self-plagiarism by changing the title or the order of authors, or by failing to cite their previous papers), the Editor forwards plagiarism evidence to the corresponding author, requesting further explanation. Until the explanation is offered, the review process is suspended.
6. If the response is not satisfactory, the authors acknowledge their guilt, or there is no reaction whatsoever, the Editor is entitled to withdraw the controversial manuscript, and to inform the Readers about it.

Suspecting self-plagiarism in an already published paper

1. Having received information on suspected self-plagiarism, the Editor examines the extent of repetitions with anti-plagiarism software.
2. If the extent is small, the Editor informs the Readers about it, explaining the reasons behind their decision.
3. If the extent of repetitions is larger, one has to examine, whether the repetitions are necessary and stem from the nature of work (e.g. a repeated description of the research methods), or not.
4. If they are considered necessary, the Editor should contact the corresponding author and explain the journal's standpoint, i.e. that secondary works should contain references to the original paper. The Editor should then request it from the author to include the missing reference in the original work and/or to remove the copied material. A published erratum is then added to the paper in question.
5. If the extent of repetitions is significant (i.e. the paper is based on the same data that lead to identical or very similar results; or there is evidence that authors attempted at concealing self-plagiarism by changing the title or the order of authors, or by failing to cite their previous papers), the Editor forwards plagiarism evidence to the corresponding author, requesting further explanation. Until the explanation is offered, the review process is suspended.
6. If the response is not satisfactory, the authors acknowledge their guilt, or there is no reaction whatsoever, the Editor is entitled to withdraw the controversial paper, and to inform the Readers about it.

Suspicion of ethical breaches

1. If the reviewer suspects ethical breaches, the Editor is obliged to investigate the situation.
2. To this end, the Editor asks the reviewer to describe the problem in details. Having received the detailed description, the Editor requests reaction from the corresponding author (e.g. delivery of adequate documents), and suspends the review process until further notice.
3. Once the Editor has received the response, they may:
 - consider the explanation offered as satisfactory (and resume the review process)
 - consult it with the reviewer, whether the explanation may be considered satisfactory
 - request further explanation
 - consider the explanation offered as unsatisfactory.
1. If the explanation offered is considered as unsatisfactory, the Reviewer forwards their reservations to the author's employer or to the person in charge of research supervision in a given institution, making sure that the matter is eventually resolved. If there is no reaction on the part of the author, the Editor presents the information to a superior institution (e.g. a bioethics committee or another office in charge of unethical actions of researchers).

Suspicion of data fabrication at the stage of manuscript submission

1. If the reviewer reports their suspicion that the authors of the reviewed manuscript might have presented fabricated data in their work, the Editor should suspend the review process, requesting that the authors submit a detailed explanation of the controversial issues involved.
2. If there is no response, the Editor should attempt at contacting the remaining authors. If still no response is received, the Editor passes on the information to the author's home institution, asking that the matter be presented to the author's superiors and/or to the person in charge of research supervision (coordinating their actions with those of the co-authors' institutions, should the need arise).

If the investigation initiated at the author's home institution render unsatisfactory results (lack of response), the Editor should approach a supervisory body (e.g. an office for scientific fraud), requesting that a further inquiry be instituted. The decision on resuming the review process will depend on the result of the investigation.

1. If the author provides a satisfactory explanation, the Editor will pass it on to the reviewer, asking them to continue the review process.
2. If the author fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, or admits to data fabrication, the Editor will contact the author(s)' home institutions, requesting them to undertake a further inquiry into the matter.
3. If the authors are proven innocent, the Editor will resume the review process.
4. If their guilt is confirmed, the manuscript is rejected.

Suspicion of data fabrication in an already published paper

1. If the reviewer reports their suspicion that the authors of the reviewed manuscript might have presented fabricated data in their work, the Editor should ask an independent expert for opinion, and approach the authors, requesting that they submit a detailed explanation of the controversial issues involved.
2. If there is no response, the Editor should attach a note for the Readers to the published paper, informing them about the suspicion of fabricated data, and they should attempt at contacting the remaining authors. If still no response is received, the Editor presents the necessary information to the author's home institution, requesting that the matter be presented to the author's superiors and/or to the person in charge of research supervision (coordinating their actions with those of the co-authors' institutions, if needs be).

If the investigation initiated at the author's home institution render unsatisfactory results (lack of response), the Editor should approach a supervisory body (e.g. an office for scientific fraud), requesting that a further inquiry be instituted. The decision on withdrawing or leaving the publication in place will depend on the result of the investigation.

1. If the author provides a satisfactory explanation, the Editor should apologize to them, and remove the warning note.
2. If the author fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, or admits to data fabrication, the Editor will contact the author(s)' home institutions, requesting them to undertake a further inquiry into the matter.
3. If the authors are proven innocent, the Editor will apologize to the authors, and remove the warning note.
4. If their guilt is confirmed, the paper will be withdrawn, and an official note will be published on the website.

Request to add or remove an author at the stage of manuscript review

1. The Editor should look into the reasons behind any changes on the list of authors, and discuss them with the corresponding author.
2. Afterwards, the Editor should contact all of the authors, including the person added to the list (or removed from it), requesting their consent.
3. If no author objects to the changes, the Editor request an update on the individual contributions, and the manuscript is approved for further review process.
4. If the authors are not unanimous, the Editor suspends the review process until a unanimous decision is reached.

Request to add or remove an author after publication

As a rule, there should be no changes on the list of authors, once the paper has been published. The only exception to the rule is the confirmation of ghost authors or guest authors being involved in the

process. In such a situation, if there are no other ethical considerations, the Editor may add the name of the overlooked author or may remove the added author from the list.

If one of the authors objects to the published conclusions, they may have a letter to the Editorial Board published, explaining their point of view.

If an ethical breach is identified by one of the authors, the Editor may remove the entire controversial paper, and ask the remaining authors to prepare a text free of the above mentioned defects.

Guest authors and ghost authors

With a view to guaranteeing scientific accuracy and upholding ethical standards within the scientific community, the Editorial Board of "OphthaTherapy. Therapies in Ophthalmology" undertakes steadfast actions against the phenomenon of omitting significant co-authors from the author list, and against guest authorship. Being aware of the complexity of the two notions, we present their definitions below.

A ghost author is a person who has made a significant contribution to the writing of a manuscript, but is left out of the author list, despite the fact that they have met authorship criteria. It should be emphasized here that a ghost author is not the same thing as a ghostwriter (i.e. a person who offers linguistic support, but has made no substantial contribution to the content of the paper as such), as omitted authors frequently perform other roles, and in particular deal with data analysis. According to the ICMJE criteria for research papers, a medical writer (ghostwriter) does not qualify as an author, but their contribution should be mentioned in the acknowledgements section, along with the sources of funding.

A guest author or a gift author is someone who is named as an author, but who has not met authorship criteria, and is only included in the author list to make the publication appear more impressive. Guest authorship often serves the purpose of enhancing one another's CVs (i.e. adding befriended authors to your publications so as to be added to their author lists in exchange).

The following signs may indicate the presence of the above mentioned practices:

- The corresponding author appears to be incapable to answer the reviewer's comments.
- Changes are introduced by someone from outside of the author list.
- Certain qualities of the manuscript indicate that it has been prepared by someone omitted from the author list or from the acknowledgements section.
- An extremely prolific author of review or opinion papers.
- Many similar review/preliminary/opinion papers have been published under different author names (it may be detected with the help of Medline or Google, when searching by title or key words).
- There are no specific roles ascribed to co-authors on the list (e.g. it appears that none of the named authors was responsible for data analysis or preparation of the preliminary version of the text).
- A suspiciously long or short list of authors.

- Industry-funded research with no authors representing the sponsoring company.

If the above mentioned practices are detected, the Editor may undertake the following actions:

- improve the author list so that it reflects the real contributions,
- publish a formal correction notice,
- remove the paper.

Suspicion that the reviewer has appropriated the author's ideas or data

1. If the author accuses the reviewer of having appropriated their work, the Editor should start from collecting source materials (manuscript files), and verifying, whether the accused person has indeed reviewed the author's manuscript, or perhaps has only been invited to review it, but declined.
2. If the accused person has not been involved at any stage of the manuscript review process, the Editor should contact the actual reviewers, making sure that they have not shared the manuscript or its parts with anyone else.
3. If there is no link between the accused person and the manuscript, the Editor should inform the author about it, and consider revealing the reviewers' names to them (provided the reviewers give their consent).
4. If the person accused by the author of misappropriation has indeed reviewed the manuscript or entered in any contact with it during the review process, the Editor shall ask the author to submit all materials that might testify to wrongful use. Decisions on further actions will be based on their analysis.
5. If the submitted materials fail to substantiate the allegations, the Editor shall dismiss the complaint, explaining their standpoint to the author.
6. If the materials indicate that misappropriation might be at play, the Editor contacts the person accused of it, presents the situations, and requests that the accused party respond to the allegations. If the explanation offered is satisfactory, the Editor informs the author about it, and presents their decision on dismissing the allegations.
7. If the explanation is not satisfactory, or the accused party fails to respond whatsoever, the Editor should contact their home research institution to get assistance in solving the situation. Until the final verdict is reached, the Editor suspends the accused person from duties as a reviewer, and transfers all their assignments to other reviewers.
8. If irregularities are found that are beyond any doubt, the person accused of misappropriation is permanently removed from the list of reviewers.