PUBLICATION ETHICS STATEMENT

General duties and responsibilities of editors

Editors should be responsible for everything published in their journals. They should:

- strive to meet the needs of readers and authors;
- constantly improve the journal;
- ensure the quality of the material they publish;
- champion freedom of expression;
- maintain the integrity of the academic record;
- preclude business needs from compromising intellectual standards;
- always be willing to publish corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies when needed.

Relations with readers

Readers should be informed about who has funded research and on the role of the funders in the research.

Relations with authors

Editors should take all reasonable steps to ensure the quality of the material they publish, recognizing that journals and sections within journals will have different aims and standards.

Editors' decisions to accept or reject a paper for publication should be based only on the paper's importance, originality, and clarity, and the study's relevance to the remit of the journal.

A description of peer review processes should be published, and Editors should be ready to justify any important deviation from the described processes.

Journals should have a declared mechanism for authors to appeal against Editorial decisions.

Editors should publish guidance to authors on everything that is expected of them. This guidance should be regularly updated and should refer or link to this code.

Editors should not reverse decisions to accept submissions unless serious problems are identified with the submission. New Editors should not overturn decisions to publish submissions made by the previous Editor unless serious problems are identified.

Relations with reviewers

Editors should publish guidance to reviewers on everything that is expected of them. This guidance should be regularly updated and should refer or link to this code.

Editors should have systems to ensure that peer reviewers' identities are protected — unless they have an open review system that is declared to authors and reviewers.

The peer-review process

Editors should have systems to ensure that material submitted to their journal remains confidential while under review.

Complaints

Editors should respond promptly to complaints and should ensure there is a way for dissatisfied complainants to take complaints further. This mechanism should be made clear in the journal.

Encouraging debate

Cogent criticisms of published work should be published unless Editors have convincing reasons why they cannot be. Authors of criticized material should be given the opportunity to respond.

Studies that challenge previous work published in the journal should be given an especially sympathetic hearing. Studies reporting negative results should not be excluded.

Encouraging academic integrity

Editors should ensure that research material they publish conforms to internationally accepted ethical guidelines.

Editors should seek assurances that all researches have been approved by an appropriate body (e.g. research ethics committee, institutional review board). However, Editors should recognize that such approval does not guarantee that the research is ethical.

Protecting individual data

Editors should protect the confidentiality of individual information (e.g. that obtained through the doctor–patient relationship). It is therefore almost always necessary to obtain written informed consent from patients described in case reports and for photographs of patients. It may be possible to publish without explicit consent if the report is important to public health (or is in some other way important); consent would be unusually burdensome to obtain; and a reasonable individual would be unlikely to object to publication (all three conditions must be met).

Pursuing misconduct

Editors have a duty to act if they suspect misconduct. This duty extends to both published and unpublished papers.

Editors should not simply reject papers that raise concerns about possible misconduct. They are ethically obliged to pursue alleged cases.

Editors should first seek a response from those accused. If they are not satisfied with the response, they should ask the relevant employers or some appropriate body (perhaps a regulatory body) to investigate.

Editors should make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a proper investigation is conducted; if this does not happen. Editors should make all reasonable attempts to persist in obtaining a resolution to the problem. This is an onerous but important duty.

Ensuring the integrity of the academic record

Whenever it is recognized that a significant inaccuracy, misleading statement or distorted report has been published, it must be corrected promptly and with due prominence.

If, after an appropriate investigation, an item proves to be fraudulent, it should be retracted. The retraction should be clearly identifiable to readers and indexing systems.

Relations with journal owners and publishers

The relationship of Editors to publishers and owners is often complex but should in each case be based firmly on the principle of Editorial independence. Notwithstanding the economic and political realities of their journals, Editors should make decisions on which articles to publish based on quality and suitability for readers rather than for immediate financial or political gain.

Commercial considerations

Editors should have declared policies on advertising in relation to the content of the journal and on processes for publishing supplements.

Misleading advertisements must be refused, and Editors must be willing to publish criticisms, according to the same criteria used for material in the rest of the journal.

Reprints should be published as they appear in the journal unless a correction is to be added.

Conflict of interest

Editors should have systems for managing their own conflicts of interest as well as those of their staff, authors, reviewers and Editorial board members.

For more info, please visit:

http://www.wame.org/about/recommendations-on-publication-ethics-policie