

## **Ethical policies of *Scandinavian Journal of Immunology***

The ethical policies of *Scandinavian Journal of Immunology* have been adapted (with permission) from the guidelines published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd<sup>1</sup> and the guidelines adopted by the British Medical Association.<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of the editors, these represent stringent and careful policies for a leading medical journal. Submitted work must comply with these policies, which are also based on the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines on good publication and comply with their [Code of Conduct](#).

### **AUTHORSHIP**

All authors must fulfil the following three criteria:

- Have made a substantial contribution to research design, or the acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data;
- Have drafted the paper or revised it critically;
- Have approved the submitted and final versions.

In the Acknowledgments section of the paper all authors must indicate their specific contributions to the work described in the manuscript. Some examples include

- X performed the research;
- Y designed the research study;
- Z contributed essential reagents or tools;
- A analysed the data;
- B wrote the paper.

An author may list more than one contribution, and more than one author may have contributed to the same element of the work. E.g. 'A performed the research, A and C analysed the data and wrote the paper, E contributed the knockout mice for the study and G designed the research study and wrote the paper'.

### **ETHICS APPROVAL FOR PAPERS SUBMITTED TO SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF IMMUNOLOGY**

The Editors aim to ensure that all articles published in *Scandinavian Journal of Immunology* (hereinafter called 'the journal') meet internationally accepted ethical standards. To achieve this, we evaluate the ethical aspects of submitted work that involves human or animal subjects. We require

that authors submitting a paper provide the date, approval number or code and or name of the approving committee on all work submitted to the journal.

If ethical concerns are raised, we will require full disclosure of ethical aspects of a study (such as copies of the consent forms or animal care certification) and we may, at our discretion conduct a formal or informal ethical review of the study whether or not it meets acceptable standards for publication. Results of this review may be shared with the authors, and if concerns are identified they will be passed along to the authors' institution(s).

Editorial appraisal of ethical issues goes beyond simply deciding whether human subjects in a study gave fully informed consent, although this is one very important issue to consider. The Editors will judge whether the overall design and conduct of each piece of work is morally justifiable. If a study is deemed unethical, it will be rejected whether or not the findings were judged to be of importance.

### **Patient confidentiality and consent to publication**

The journal requires that authors use the BMJ guidelines on patient consent to publication: <http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/about-bmj/advisory-panels/ethics-committee/>.

Manuscripts concerned with human studies must contain statements indicating that informed, written consent has been obtained, that studies have been performed according to the [Declaration of Helsinki](#), and that the procedures have been approved by a local ethics committee. If individuals might be identified from a publication (e.g. from images) authors must obtain explicit written consent from the individual.

### **Animal work**

Manuscripts describing studies involving animals should comply with local/national guidelines governing the use of experimental animals and must contain a statement indicating that the procedures have been approved by the appropriate regulatory body.

### **Defining Ethnicity**

Ethnicity and culture are socially determined variables of limited use in biological research, though they are useful in health services research. All the variables are confounded by socioeconomic status. Try to use accurate descriptions of race, ethnicity and culture rather than catch all terms in common use. In the Methods section of research papers, describe the logic behind any ethnic groupings used. It is best to present a range of information including the following:

- Genetic differences;
- Self assigned ethnicity, using nationally agreed guidelines;
- Observer assigned ethnicity;
- Country or area of birth (participant's own, or parents' or grandparents', if applicable);
- Years in country of residence;
- Religion.

## Reporting Clinical Trials Conducted by Pharmaceutical Companies

Clinical trials should be registered and publications must include the registration number and name of the trial register. If these are not available, please provide an explanation.

Please ensure that clinical trials sponsored by pharmaceutical companies follow the [guidelines on good publication practice](#). These guidelines aim to ensure that such trials are published in a responsible and ethical manner. The guidelines cover companies' responsibility to endeavour to publish results of all studies, companies' relations with investigators, measures to prevent redundant or premature publication, methods to improve trial identification and the role of professional medical writers.

## Role of professional medical writers in peer-reviewed publications

Please ensure that you follow the guidelines by the [European Medical Writers Association](#) on the role of medical writers. The guidelines emphasise the importance of respecting widely recognised authorship criteria, and in particular of ensuring that all people listed as named authors have full control of the content of papers. The role of professional medical writers must be transparent. Please name any professional medical writer among the list of contributors to any article for the journal (not only original research papers), and specify in the acknowledgments and statement of competing interests for the article who paid the writer. Writers and authors must have access to relevant data while writing papers. Medical writers have professional responsibilities to ensure that the papers they write are scientifically valid and are written in accordance with generally accepted ethical standards.<sup>3</sup>

## DISCLOSURE AND COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENTS

Authors are required to disclose financial interests in any company or institution that might benefit from their publication. A competing interest exists when a primary interest (such as patients' welfare or the validity of research) might be influenced by a secondary interest (such as financial gain or personal rivalry). It may arise for the authors of the journal article when they have a financial interest that may influence their interpretation of their results or those of others. Financial interests are the easiest to define and they have the greatest potential to influence the objectivity, integrity or perceived value of a publication. They may include any or all, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Personal financial interests:** Stocks or shares in companies that may gain or lose financially through publication; consultant fees or fees from speakers bureaus other forms of remuneration from organisations that may gain or lose financially; patents or patent applications whose value may be affected by publication;
- **Funding:** Research support from organisations that might gain or lose financially through publication of the paper;
- **Employment:** Recent, present or anticipated employment of you or a family member by any organization that may gain or lose financially through publication of the paper. Any such competing interest that authors may have should be declared. The aim of the statement is not to eradicate competing interests, as they are almost inevitable. Papers will not be

rejected because there is a competing interest, but a declaration on whether or not there are competing interests will be added to the paper;

- **Patent rights;**
- **Consultancy work.**

At the time of **submission**, all authors must complete the [Conflict of Interests \(COI\) form](#) and ensure that it reaches the Journal's editorial co-ordinator, Kate Frøland at [sji@gades.uib.no](mailto:sji@gades.uib.no)/ +47 55 97 58 17. The COI form is also available in the 'Instructions and Forms' section of the Journal's [ScholarOne Manuscripts website](#).

All sources of funding must be disclosed in the Acknowledgments section of the paper. List governmental, industrial, charitable, philanthropic and/or personal sources of funding used for the studies described in the manuscript. Attribution of these funding sources is preferred.

Examples:

- This work was supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, USA (DKxxxx to AB);
- This work was supported by the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada (grant to AB and CD);
- This work was supported by a grant from Big Pharma Inc. (to AB) and equipment was donated by Small Pharma Inc. EF received a graduate studentship award from the University of xxxxx.

For papers where there are no competing interests, all authors must include the statement 'Competing interests: the authors have no competing interests.'

We will also ask reviewers to provide a statement of competing interests.

## **SERIOUS RESEARCH MISCONDUCT**

Very rarely, the Editors may have cause to suspect serious research misconduct, based on comments received or his/her own review of a paper. In this case, the article in question will be held in abeyance until this matter is resolved. The Editors will contact authors and any appropriate third party to ascertain whether the grounds for investigation are justified. If serious research misconduct is discovered, the Editors will contact the authors' institutions after rejecting the paper.

Despite vigorous peer-review, it is possible that a paper that is fraudulent in some manner may be published. If this is discovered, it will be retracted and appropriate steps will be taken to notify readers of the journal, and the authors' institution. Retractions will include the word 'Retraction' in the title, so that they are identified as such on indexing systems, for example, PubMed.

In any case of serious research misconduct, all authors of such an article may be banned from future publication in the journal.

## Plagiarism and falsification

The Journal carefully scrutinises all papers for evidence of plagiarism and falsified data using specialised software. Plagiarism can comprise the following:

- Multiple submission (i.e. to several journals at the same time);
- Redundant publication (i.e. when the same data are published repeatedly, especially when articles contain an unacceptable degree of overlap but some original data, or in the case of the first time data are published (followed by subsequent redundant publications);
- Self-plagiarism;
- Reviewer misconduct (e.g. a reviewer making use of material obtained during review);
- Changes to authorship after publication due to discovery of guest or ghost authors;
- deliberate omission of funding or competing interest information.

## Manipulation of images

The journal follows the [guidelines and procedures](#) established by the Council of Science Editors for digital imaging data. Please note the following in particular:

- Images cannot be modified to change the overall appearance or appearance of any specific feature;
- Adjustments of brightness and contrast or colour balance are acceptable but must be applied to the entire image;
- Features cannot be obscured and any rearrangements must be explicitly indicated by the insertion of dividing lines;
- Images will be examined for any indication of improper modifications. The final acceptance of all manuscripts is contingent on any concerns raised in our review of the figures being resolved.

## Responding to institutions and research integrity bodies (eg the ORI)

Where the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), and other research integrity bodies, request that the Journals publishes a correction or retraction resulting from scientific misconduct cases, the Editors will consider this request carefully. If the retraction is accepted by the Editor, the usual procedure for Retractions will be followed (see above).

## HONEST ERRORS – PUBLICATION OF CORRECTIONS

The journal has a duty to publish corrections (errata) when errors could affect the interpretation of data or information, whatever the cause of the error (i.e. arising from author or publisher errors). It is important to set the scientific record straight.

The title of the Erratum will include the words 'Erratum'. Errata are published on a numbered page (print and electronic) and are listed in the journal's table of contents. They will cite the original article and be linked to it, so that indexing and abstracting services are able to identify and link to both the erratum and the original paper. Reasons for retraction are clearly stated.

## APPEALS

Decisions on manuscripts or on ethical misconduct are regarded as final; however, we recognise the right of an individual to challenge our decisions and seek an appeal. For appeals on manuscripts, contact the Editor-in-Chief, who will be given full access to the submitted materials and all correspondence. He will conduct an inquiry independent of the Editorial Board and render a final binding decision. For appeals on ethical issues, contact the Editor-in-Chief, [Roland Jonsson](#), who will be given full access to the submitted materials and all correspondence. He will conduct an inquiry independent of the Editors and Editorial Board and render a final binding decision.

## HANDLING EDITORS' CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND PUBLICATIONS BY THE EDITORS OR EDITORIAL BOARD

Editors or Editorial Board members are never involved in editorial decisions about their own work. Journal editors, Editorial Board members and other editorial staff (including peer reviewers) withdraw from discussions about submissions where any circumstances might prevent him/her offering unbiased editorial decisions.

When making editorial decisions about peer reviewed articles where an editor is an author or is acknowledged as a contributor, affected editors or staff members exclude themselves and are not involved in the publication decision. When editors are presented with papers where their own interests may impair their ability to make an unbiased editorial decision, he/she deputises decisions about the paper to a suitably qualified individual.

[Editors](#) and members of the Editorial Board disclose their competing interests on an annual basis.

## EDITORS' DUTY OF CONFIDENTIALITY TO AUTHORS

The Editors of the journal treat all submitted manuscripts as confidential documents, which means they will not divulge information about a manuscript to anyone without the authors' permission.

During the process of manuscript review, the following people may also have access to manuscripts:

- Editors and editorial staff of the journal;
- External reviewers, including statisticians and experts in trial methods;
- Third parties (the only occasion when details about a manuscript might be passed to a third party without the authors' permission if there is reason to suggest serious research misconduct—see above);
- Third parties invited to write an Editorial Commentary on a paper.

## REFERENCES

1. Graf C, Wagner E, Bowman A, Fiack S, Scott-Lichter D, Robinson A. Best Practice Guidelines on Publication Ethics: a Publisher's Perspective. *Int J Clin Pract* 2007; 61(Suppl. 152): 1–26.
2. <http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors/editorial-policies>.
3. Jacobs A, Wager E. European Medical Writers Association (EMWA) guidelines on the role of medical writers in developing peer-reviewed publications. *Curr Med Res Opin* 2005; 21: 317–321.