

Ethical policies of *Transfusion Medicine*

The Ethical policies of *Transfusion Medicine* have been adapted from the guidelines published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd¹ and the guidelines adopted by the British Medical Journal.² 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 based on the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines on good publication and comply with their [Code of Conduct](#).

ETHICS APPROVAL FOR PAPERS SUBMITTED TO TRANSFUSION MEDICINE

The Editors aim to ensure that all articles published in *Transfusion Medicine* (hereafter 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) 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 ethical. 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

Transfusion Medicine 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 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.

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 immediately 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 will be banned from future publication in *Transfusion Medicine*.

Plagiarism and falsification of data

The Journal carefully scrutinises all papers for evidence of plagiarism and falsified data using CrossCheck software. This encompasses 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) when retraction would deprive readers of potentially useful data)
- 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 Journal 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).

Expressions of Concern

The Journal publishes 'Expressions of Concern' if the Editors have well-founded suspicions of misconduct, where they feel it is sufficiently serious to warrant warning potential readers. The title of the Expression of Concern will include the words 'Expression of Concern'. They are published on a numbered page (print and electronic) and are listed in the Journal's table of contents.

An Expressions of Concern 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 the Expression of Concern' are clearly stated.

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'. They 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 publishing an Erratum 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, one of the Journal's Associate Editors will be appointed to conduct an inquiry independent of the Editor and render a final binding decision. For appeals on ethical issues, the Associate Editor will be given full access to the submitted materials and all correspondence. He/she will conduct an inquiry independent of the Editor 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' DUTY OF CONFIDENTIALITY TO AUTHORS

The Editors of *Transfusion Medicine* 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 at the *Transfusion Medicine*.
- 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).

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: <http://www.gpp-guidelines.org>. 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.

AUTHORSHIP

All authors must fulfil the following three criteria:

- Substantial contributions to research design, or the acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data,
- Drafting the paper or revising it critically, and
- Approval of 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'.

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 *Transfusion Medicine* (not only original research papers), and specify in the acknowledgements 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.³

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> (accessed on 9 November 2010).
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.