

Ethical policies of *Helicobacter*

The Ethical policies of *Helicobacter* have been adapted (with permission) from the guidelines published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd¹ and the guidelines adopted by the British Medical Association.² In the opinion of the Editor, 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 *HELICOBACTER*

The Editor aims to ensure that all articles published in *Helicobacter* (hereafter called ‘the Journal’) meet internationally accepted ethical standards. To achieve this, I evaluate the ethical aspects of submitted work that involves human or animal subjects. I 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 Editor 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

Helicobacter 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.

Research involving animals

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 Editor 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 Editor will contact authors and any appropriate third party to ascertain whether the grounds for investigation are justified. If serious research misconduct is discovered, the Editor 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 *Helicobacter*.

Plagiarism and falsification of data

The Journal reserves the right to carefully scrutinise all papers for evidence of plagiarism and falsified data using CrossCheck 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) 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.

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 Editor 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 Editor has 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 word '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 retraction are clearly stated.

APPEALS

Decisions on manuscripts or on ethical misconduct are regarded as final; however, I recognise the right of an individual to challenge our decisions and seek an appeal. For appeals on editorial decisions, contact the Editor-in-Chief, Dr David Graham, in the first instance, who will handle the process in accordance to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)/Publisher's [flowchart](#).

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 a *Helicobacter* 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 nuclear family member by any organisation 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.**

Upon acceptance for publication, all authors must complete the [Conflicts of Interests \(COI\) form](#) and upload to 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.'

Reviewers are asked to provide a statement of competing interests through the Reviewer's Report Form in Scholar One Manuscripts.

HANDLING EDITOR'S CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND PUBLICATIONS BY THE EDITOR OR EDITORIAL BOARD

The Editor, Assistant Editor or Editorial Board members are never involved in editorial decisions about their own work. The Editor, Assistant Editor, 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 the Editor is an author or is acknowledged as a contributor, the Editor or staff members exclude

themselves and are not involved in the publication decision. When the Editor is presented with papers where his own interests may impair his ability to make an unbiased editorial decision, he deputises decisions about the paper to a suitably qualified individual.

The [Editor](#) and [Assistant Editor](#) disclose their competing interests on a regular basis.

EDITOR'S DUTY OF CONFIDENTIALITY TO AUTHORS

The Editor of *Helicobacter* 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:

- Editor, Assistant Editor and editorial staff at *Helicobacter*.
- 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).

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 should include the registration number and name of the trial register.

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 at least one of 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.

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 *Helicobacter* (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 29 June 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.