

## ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN PUBLISHING

The publications of the Medical University - Varna and the scientific articles and communications published in them are based on ethical principles, enshrined in internationally established requirements and standards for good publishing practice of a number of scientific organizations and international committees: Committee on Publication Ethics; International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; Council of International Organizations for Medical Sciences; the World Association of Medical Editors, the World Medical Association, etc.

The publications adhere to the ethical principles and requirements for the manuscripts proposed for printing, enshrined in the following internationally accepted documents:

- Committee on Publication Ethics. Guidelines on Good Publication Practice. (COPE). 1999.
- Elsevier. Publishing Ethics Resource Kit (PERK).  
(<http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/editorshome.editors/>).
- Elsevier. Ethical Guidelines for Journal Publication ([www.elsevier.com/publishingethics](http://www.elsevier.com/publishingethics); [www.elsevier.com/ethicalguidelines](http://www.elsevier.com/ethicalguidelines)).
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Publishing and Editorial Issues Related to Publication in Biomedical Journals (<http://www.icmje.org/publishing.html>).
- Council of Science Editors. CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications, 2012 Update. 3rd Revised Edition. Wheat Ridge, CO: 2012. [http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/files/public/entire\\_whitepaper.pdf](http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/files/public/entire_whitepaper.pdf).
- The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki) [www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html](http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html)

The ethical norms for publishing have been adopted by the Commission for Ethics of Research at the Medical University - Varna.

The ethical principles are most generally focused on the duties and responsibilities of the publishing authors, the editors of the journals and the reviewers of the proposed manuscripts.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AUTHORS**

### ***Requirements for objectivity and truthfulness***

The authors of the research publication must present accurately, reliably and objectively the work performed on the study, the actual results and their objective discussion.

It is inadmissible for the authors of the publication to hide the truth - intentionally or due to ignorance or negligence.

Any change, omission and/or deliberate misinterpretation of the data is ethically unacceptable, that is counterfeiting and fabrication.

Any manipulation of the results and deliberate publication of false conclusions in order to support or prove author's thesis is inadmissible.

### ***Originality, plagiarism, quotation***

The authors must ensure that the original publication proposed for publishing has been developed by them. It must contain a sufficiently detailed description of the experimental part, as well as quotations related to it and allowing its full reproduction.

Plagiarism in all its forms (abuse of name, copying or paraphrasing) is inadmissible, unethical and unacceptable and the authors shall bear personal liability for it.

In case of using any results or text from publications of other authors, they must be quoted accurately and correctly.

When using foreign unpublished data, the author must have requested (and received) permission from the researcher and/or the copyright holder of the respective result. If permission is obtained, the quotation must be data-specific.

It is inadmissible to use or report information that has been informally provided in conversations, correspondence, discussions, as well as information obtained in the course of confidential activities (review of articles, applications for project funding) without explicit written permission.

### ***Access to original data***

The authors must provide access to the primary original data in case of being requested by the reviewer after the publication.

### ***Repeated and simultaneous publishing***

It is contrary to ethical principles to submit a manuscript that has already been printed in another journal or has been submitted for review and is awaiting a decision for publication.

Submission of any materials that duplicate parts of an already published article or unnecessary "fragmentation" of publications is inadmissible.

Authors declare that the scientific materials have not been previously published in a written or electronic form; they have not been proposed and will not be proposed for publication in another journal during their review in the specific edition of the Medical University - Varna and until the final decision for publishing by the editorial board. In case of an overlap with an already published article, including the use of the same topics and duplication of data, such article should be quoted in its entirety.

### ***Acknowledgments, funding and sponsorship***

The expression of gratitude for the assistance provided by other participants in the study - persons who have contributed intellectually or provided technical, organizational, material or financial assistance is compliant with the ethical principles of publishing.

All persons who have contributed to the development of the material but who do not meet the authorship criteria, should be mentioned in the acknowledgment section. The authors are responsible for the written consent of the persons to whom they express their acknowledgment.

Thanks are due to colleagues, reviewers and editors, when they have made valuable suggestions or provided real help to improve the work. Special thanks are due to the colleagues who have provided the author with the results of their published or unpublished research.

All sources of funding must be stated as acknowledgment at the end of the text. The projects and grants under which the research funding has been received must be noted. The authors should announce the role of the sponsors to the research.

### ***Copyright***

All abuses related to the determination of author's status are ethically inadmissible.

The recognition of authorship shall be based on direct participation and substantial intellectual contribution to the research and shall predetermine full responsibility for the content of the published manuscript by each co-author.

The attribution of co-authorship to a person without actual creative participation (imposed or "honorary" authorship), as well as non-recognition of deserved co-authorship and disregard of due acknowledgment for significant contribution are serious violations of the good authorship practice.

Only persons who have made a significant contribution to the study concept, design and conduct, data collection, production, analysis and interpretation of results as well as to writing and critical revision of the manuscript and who have given their consent to its publication shall be indicated as co-authors.

Co-authors shall not be any persons who provide only organizational, technical, financial, methodological and other help or assistance but do not participate in the actual creative process.

The support from other units and individuals, as well as from members of the management of the scientific organization shall be reflected in a note of acknowledgment, not by inclusion in the list of co-authors.

A person who has sponsored the publication of a scientific paper cannot claim co-authorship, nor can the supervisor who has provided scientific guidance in writing it if they have not participated in the actual creative process.

The order of the authors shall be based on a joint decision of the entire team of authors, taken at the very beginning of the study. In the case of joint research, it is ethical to determine the real contribution of each researcher, according to the work done by them.

Any form of intellectual exploitation is inadmissible, regardless of the relationship of the co-authors and the administrative or academic position they hold.

Unpublished materials of the team are not allowed to be presented as own research of anybody without the consent of the other members of the team.

The materials sent to the editorial board should be discussed in advance in the clinic (department) where the first author works.

The corresponding author must ensure that all co-authors and collaborators are included in the manuscript. They must ensure that the co-authors have accepted the final version of the article and agree to submit it for publication.

The authors are responsible for the content of the publications, as well as for the personal contribution of the co-authors involved.

The authors shall fill out a statement that the study was approved by the Committee on Research Ethics.

Copyright for open access publishing must comply with the public license Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.

### ***Ethical aspects in human and experimental animal research***

The materials submitted and the studies described therein should comply with the established ethical standards concerning human studies and experiments with experimental animals.

The reports of results of experimental studies involving humans or animals must contain written confirmation that the requirements of the relevant official documents in this field have been complied with.

When publishing scientific studies on humans, confirmation is required that the study has been approved by the relevant ethics committee of the institution in which it was conducted and that the participants in the study have given their informed consent to be included in it. Patients with their names, initials or identifiable photo material should not be mentioned.

When publishing any studies with experiments on experimental animals, confirmation is needed that their care has met the relevant requirements and prior authorization has been obtained to conduct the experiments by the Committee on Animal Ethics, a permanent advisory body to the Director-General of the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency.

### ***Conflict of interest***

Each author is obliged to report any financial or personal relationships (if any) with other persons or organizations, the existence of which could influence the incorrect reporting/distortion of the survey results or their interpretation (especially in studies sponsored by pharmaceutical companies).

Examples of potential conflicts of interest include: employment, consultancy services, fees, paid expert recommendations, patent registration, supply of materials, grants or other funding.

Admission of random participants in the studies, interference in the experiments, conflict of interest between the authors of the publication are not allowed.

Publishing or use of a part of the material without the prior consent of the other co-authors is inadmissible.

### ***Publishing errors and corrections***

The author must agree with all co-authors the recommendations for corrections made by reviewers and the editorial board.

Where any significant errors or inaccuracies are detected in a published work, the author is obliged to notify in due time the editor or publisher to make the necessary corrections.

If the editor or publisher receives information on a significant error from third parties, it is the author's responsibility to correct the error or to provide evidence of the correctness of the original article.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDITORS**

### ***Reason for publication***

The proposed scientific materials shall be published only after review and approval by the editorial board.

The editorial board supports the principle of "editorial freedom and independence" in preventing interference by the publisher with regard to the thematic selection and the publishing decisions.

Editors, together with the editorial board, are responsible for deciding on the publication of a scientific development. When deciding on publication, editors shall consult the members of the editorial board and the reviewers.

The decision must be the result of the compliance of the work with the criteria for publication in the specific edition, the journal objectives and scope. The leading criterion for publication of the submitted materials is the importance for the development of scientific knowledge and the academic contribution in the scientific field, but not the career development of the publishing author.

The editors must avoid publishing of meaningless, duplicate publications or publications non-compliant with the previously defined criteria.

It is the responsibility of the editorial board to organize a review quickly and to examine author's work as soon as possible, to take a clear stand on and to report it to the author as soon as possible.

The editorial board is who must draw the final conclusion on the merits and disadvantages of a manuscript. The editorial board shall have the duty to help the author to present the results of their studies in the best form, so that the work can be as useful as possible to the scientific community.

The editorial board shall be obliged to notify the author of any weaknesses and errors without the removal and correction of which the article would not be published. These include both technical defects and factual and methodical errors, incorrect, insufficient or unethical quotation, etc.

It is the duty of editors to ensure that all published materials are previously assessed by reviewers with appropriate qualifications and competence on the peer-reviewed issue.

### ***Objectivity***

The editors shall evaluate the material submitted for publication objectively, without being influenced by gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, ethnic origin, nationality, political affiliation, administrative position or academic position of the authors.

The editorial board shall provide a diverse affiliation of the published authors as well as of the evaluating reviewers.

### ***Transparency and sustainability***

The editors shall have a transparent publishing policy.

It is the responsibility of the editors to develop, validate, systematically update and promote publication criteria and requirements to the authors, and guidelines for reviewers.

It is the responsibility of editors to actively seek feedback from authors, readers, reviewers with a view to improving the editing process.

It is the responsibility of the editorial board to support any initiatives to avoid abuse in scientific publication and authorship and to fight against plagiarism.

### ***Confidentiality***

Editors or members of the editorial board may disseminate information related to material submitted for publication only to the correspondent author, reviewers, potential reviewers, and, where appropriate, to the publisher.

Ideas or information acquired in the process of evaluating the material submitted for publication are strictly confidential and cannot be used for their own gain.

### ***Conflict of interest***

Unpublished information disclosed in the submitted manuscript may not be used by editors for their research without the explicit written consent of the author.

The editors must refuse to examine any manuscripts in which they have a conflict of interest arising from competing, collaborative or other relationships with any of the authors, sponsors or institutions associated with the publication.

The editors must require all contributors to disclose any competing interests in a timely manner and to publish corrections, if such interests are proven after the publication has been published.

The process of accepting, examining and reviewing any sponsored appendices to the journal shall be based on their scientific value and not influenced by any commercial factors.

Those sections of the journal that are not subject to review must be clearly indicated.

### ***Self-quotation of the journal***

It is unacceptable for the editor to require authors to quote the specific publication and to make this a condition for accepting a publication.

Any recommendations to quote any other articles should be based on a direct link to the material submitted for publication in order to develop research and scientific knowledge.

The editor may direct the author to appropriate literature without going beyond the formal requirements for quoting certain journals.

### ***Complaints***

The editor is obliged to take appropriate action in the case of complaints concerning ethical aspects related to a submitted manuscript or an article already published.



This includes contacting the author of the article and thorough examination of the complaint.

In cases where the complaint is upheld, it is desirable to publish corrections, statement of opinion, rebuttal, etc.

## **DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REVIEWERS**

### ***Support to editorial decisions***

Peer-review is a key point of communication in scientific circles and an important element of the scientific method. The review of a scientific article assists both the author in improving the quality of his manuscript, as well as the editorial process and publication-related decision-making.

### ***Correctness in terms of sufficient qualification***

The reviewer must be one of the most competent scientists in the relevant scientific field.

The reviewer is obliged to notify the editor in cases of insufficient qualification to review a scientific material, or if they are unable to make a sufficiently accurate review.

It is unacceptable to delay the peer-review when a commitment is assumed therefor.

### ***Confidentiality***

Any manuscript subject to peer-review must be regarded as a confidential document. It is unacceptable to discuss or display a manuscript to any third parties, except where they are authorised by the editor of the journal.

### ***Objectivity***

The reviewer is obliged to evaluate the submitted manuscript objectively, not to be influenced by personal biases and relations with the author of the peer-reviewed work.

The reviewer shall clearly express their opinion and support it with objective arguments and constructive criticism.

Personal criticisms and personal attacks to the author by the reviewer are inadmissible.

### ***Correctness of quotations***

The reviewer is obliged to take care of the correctness of the quotations. The reviewer must promptly notify the editor in cases of incorrect quotation or of noticed duplication of parts of the material with an article already published.

### ***Conflict of interest***

Use of an unpublished material in a manuscript submitted for review by the reviewer for their own research without the explicit written consent of the author is inadmissible.

Any ideas and information acquired in the process of reviewing are strictly confidential and cannot be used for own gain.

It is unacceptable for the reviewer to accept for review an article in cases where they have established cooperation or other relationships with members of the author's collective or with institutions related to the submitted material that would influence the objective assessment of the work.

It is desirable that the reviewer does not have their own specific studies (completed or in progress) that overlap with the research in the peer-reviewed work.

It is unacceptable to publish any reviews or comments on a submitted material without prior consent from authors and reviewers.

***These Principles of Publishing Ethics were adopted by Decision 40 of 30.10.2014 of the Committee of Research Ethics.***