PUBLISHING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS JOURNALS OF MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – SOFIA

Ethical standards for publication

Ethical standards for publication exist to ensure high-quality scientific publications and public trust in scientific findings. The editors shall take reasonable steps to identify and prevent the publication of papers where research misconduct has occurred, and in no case shall they encourage such misconduct.

Research integrity

The editors expect published research to meet the following criteria:

- honesty in all aspects of research;
- scrupulous care, thoroughness and excellence in research practice;
- transparency and open communication;
- care and respect for all participants in and subjects of research.

Review process

All manuscripts are subject to peer review and are expected to meet high academic standards. If approved by the editor, submissions will be considered by peer reviewers, whose identities will remain anonymous to the authors. Peer-review is defined as obtaining advice on individual manuscripts from reviewers' expert in the field. The peer-review is single blinded. We may sometimes ask additional reviewer(s) in papers requiring specific expertise. The reviewers should adhere to the following rules:

- Judgments should be objective.
- Reviewers may point out relevant published work which is not yet cited.
- Reviewers should have no conflicts of interest. Editors and reviewers should decline to be involved with a submission when they are in a conflict of interest (see more in the Conflicts of interest section below).
- Reviewed articles should be treated confidentially.
- Reviewers must not upload confidential manuscripts, abstracts, or other text into a chatbot, language model, or similar AI tools.

Plagiarism

Authors must not use words, figures, or ideas of others without attribution. All sources must be cited at the point they are used, and reuse of wording must be limited and be attributed or quoted

in the text. The editorial board can use specific tools (e.g. Crossref Similarity Check) to detect submissions that overlap with published and submitted manuscripts.

Manuscripts that are found to have been plagiarized from a manuscript by other authors, whether published or unpublished, will be rejected. Any published articles may need to be corrected or retracted.

Duplicate submission and redundant publication

Only original content will be considered, i.e. articles that have not been previously published. Articles based on content previously reported on conferences or in a thesis will be considered. Submitted manuscripts must not be submitted elsewhere while under consideration and must be withdrawn before being submitted elsewhere.

If authors have used their own previously published work, or work that is currently under review, as the basis for a submitted manuscript, they must cite the previous articles and indicate how their submitted manuscript differs from their previous work.

Fabrication and falsification

Submitted manuscripts whose authors are found to have fabricated or falsified the results, including the manipulation of images, will be rejected, or already published articles may be retracted.

Authorship and acknowledgements

All listed authors must have made a significant contribution to the research in the manuscript, approved its claims, and agreed to be an author. We follow the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), including those defining the 4 criteria for authorship. Anyone who contributed to the research or manuscript preparation, but is not an author, should be acknowledged with their permission.

Conflicts of interest

Conflicts of interest (COIs) occur when issues outside research can be reasonably perceived to affect the neutrality or objectivity of the work or its assessment. This can happen at any stage in the research, while the manuscript is being written, or during its review assessment. If unsure, it is better to declare a potential interest or discuss with the editorial office. Submissions with undeclared conflicts that are later revealed may be rejected.

For more information on COIs, see the guidance from the ICMJE. Possible conflicts of interest do not always stop work from being published, however they must be declared thus allowing others to make informed decisions about the work and its review process.

If conflicts of interest are found after publication, it may be necessary to publish a corrigendum. Conflicts include (and are not limited to) the following:

- Financial — funding or other payments, goods and services received or expected by the authors relating to the subject of the work or from an organization with an interest in the outcome of the work
- Affiliations — being employed by, on the advisory board for, or a member of an organization with an interest in the outcome of the work
- Intellectual property — patents or trademarks owned by someone or their organization
- Personal — friends, family, relationships, and other close personal connections
- Academic — competitors or someone whose work is critiqued.

If there are no conflicts of interest, the authors should clearly state this also. All funding, whether a conflict or not, must be declared in a funding statement. Editors and reviewers should decline

to be involved with a submission when they: have a close collaboration or personal connection to any author; have a financial interest in the subject of the work; or, feel unable to be objective.

Human and animal rights

Research involving humans or animals should be approved by relevant ethics committee(s) and should conform to local and international ethical and legal standards for research.

Authors should respect human participants' right to privacy, do their best to anonymize personal details, especially in reporting case studies, and gain any necessary consent to publish before submitting a manuscript. Statements regarding informed consent from participants and patients must be provided with the manuscript, where relevant.

All medical research involving human participants, including identifiable human material or data, should be conducted in accordance with the principles of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki.

Animal experiments require full compliance with local, national, ethical, and regulatory principles, and local licensing arrangements. Respective statements of compliance (or approvals of institutional ethical committees) should be included in the article text.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

Authors must be transparent about the use of traditional and generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT and other large language models when used to create, review, revise, or edit any of the content in their manuscript. Any such use must be disclosed and a confirmation that the author(s) take responsibility for the integrity of the content generated should be reported.

Reviewers must not upload confidential manuscripts, abstracts, or other text into a chatbot, language model, or similar AI tools.

Errors

Errors by the authors may be corrected by a corrigendum and errors by the publisher by an erratum.

Fees

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We allow for limited, appropriate and sometimes targeted advertising. The advertising must:

- be independent from editorial decisions on what is published, *and*
- be clearly distinct from content.

The editors reserve the right to reject or remove any advertising where they have concerns it contravenes scholarly research publishing best practice or our ethical principles.