

EDITORIAL

SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

• *what are the editors' responsibilities?* •

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Scientific misconduct includes not only data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, but also other practices that may result in failure in the publication of scientific research and serious deviation from the commonly accepted conduct in reporting research.⁽¹⁾

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) states that editors have the responsibility to identify possible scientific misconduct in submitted manuscripts and to publish a retraction of any fraudulent paper published in their journals. Although honest errors are considered as inherent to science, they require correction publication by the scientific journal as long as they have been detected.⁽²⁾ The ICMJE recommends following the minimum standards when an honest error is detected:⁽¹⁾ the Journal must publish the correction notice, describing the changes from the original version⁽²⁾ the correction should be indexed, the scientific journal should publish a new article version, detailing dates and changes from the original paper,⁽³⁾ the journal must archive all prior versions of the manuscript,⁽⁴⁾ the previous electronic versions should warn readers about the more recent versions of the article,⁽⁵⁾ errors that invalidate the paper results and conclusions should be retracted.

It is a consensus that editors are not responsible for conducting a full investigation of scientific misconduct, but screening for plagiarism and ensuring the quality of blind peer review are minimum requirements on ethics publication for Scientific Journals. In order to prevent legal consequences associated with forwarding a suspect manuscript to appropriate authorities for investigation, the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) recommends to editors to place, in the journal section "Instructions to the Authors", a notification stating that authors, by submitting a manuscript to the journal, agree with the journal policy and procedures for handling suspect manuscripts, including procedures for notifying the author's institution and forwarding the submitted manuscript to the sponsoring or funding institution or other appropriate authority for investigation.⁽¹⁾ ORI also recommends such policies for editors in order to reduce scientific misconduct:⁽¹⁾ Reporting Suspect Manuscripts,⁽²⁾ Procedures for Handling Suspect Manuscripts,⁽³⁾ Co-author Signatures,⁽⁴⁾ Submission of Data,⁽⁵⁾ Guidelines for Reviewers, and⁽⁶⁾ Corrections/Retractions.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has established a Code of Conduct⁽³⁾ and Retraction Guidelines for editors.⁽⁴⁾ According to the COPE guideline, a paper should be retracted if there is a clear evidence that the findings are doubtful, or result of misconduct or honest error such as miscalculation or experimental error. The same measure should be applied if the findings have been previously published without proper cross-referencing, permission, or justification or if they constitute plagiarism

or report unethical research.⁽⁴⁾ Editors should be accountable for what is published in the scientific journal, preventing conflict of interests, supporting initiatives to reduce publication misconduct, and to increase education about publication ethics, maintaining the integrity of scientific record and publishing retractions, notes, and apologies when it is needed.⁽³⁾

Editors are unconditionally involved in the process of detecting and handling scientific misconduct. They are not required to investigate scientific misconduct, but they do have the responsibility to refer suspected cases of fraud to the competent institution for investigation as well as guarantee the correction of the literature, and promotion of research integrity.

REFERENCES

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