



Editorial

Ethics in the authorship and publishing of scientific articles

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ABSTRACT

All authors to papers in the International Journal of Cardiology must adhere to the following principles:

1. That the corresponding author has the approval of all other listed authors for the submission and publication of all versions of the manuscript.
2. That all people who have a right to be recognised as authors have been included on the list of authors and everyone listed as an author has made an independent material contribution to the manuscript.
3. That the work submitted in the manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere and is not presently under consideration of publication by any other journal other than in oral, poster or abstract format.
4. That the material in the manuscript has been acquired according to modern ethical standards and has been approved by the legally appropriate ethical committee.
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6. That all material which derives from prior work, including from the same authors, is properly attributed to the prior publication by proper citation.
7. That the manuscript will be maintained on the servers of the Journal and held to be a valid publication by the Journal only as long as all statements in these principles remain true.
8. That if any of the statements above ceases to be true the authors have a duty to notify the Journal as soon as possible so that the manuscript can be withdrawn.

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The International Journal of Cardiology is one of the oldest and most independent cardiovascular journals. [1,2] Since its first publication much has changed in the world of cardiology; mega-trials, stents, cardiac resynchronisation, implantable defibrillators, stem cell and gene therapy, and genetic diagnoses. Much of this has been worthy and of profound value to mankind. The scientific literature in cardiology has grown exponentially, from 274 papers in Pubmed searchable by the keyword "Cardiology" in the journal inaugural year, 1983 to 11,033 in 2009, a 40 fold increase. So also has the detection and interest in scientific fraud in publishing increased, from 55 articles devoted to or involving scientific fraud in 1983 to 167 in 2009, a much smaller increase, perhaps compounded by one of the more notorious incidents occurring around that time (the Darsee affair [3]). There is a considerably increased interest in the topic, even if the issues are not easy to manage. Every year editors of heart themed journals meet to share stories and approaches to the detection, prevention and management of cases. A society (COPE [4]) has been formed to share best practice, yet accurate statistics and the true prevalence remain elusive. From January 1 2009 we have required all papers published in

the Journal to carry a statement that all authors adhere to our principles of ethical publishing and to cite and agree to a published statement of ethical authorship and publishing. Whilst we cannot claim that this has stopped fraud the number of cases brought to our attention has begun to fall, and perhaps most importantly cases have been easier to deal with, as the authors have agreed how their cases should be handled if subsequent evidence suggests errors, omissions or misleading statements with regard to authorship, ownership or veracity of data and the correct citing of previous work. We have also adopted the policy of formal public retraction of papers where the ethical statement no longer applies. We believe this allows the scientific community to be immediately aware of cases and for the literature to be kept accurate and consider this a superior approach to merely banning the author for a set period, notifying his or her academic employer (if such exists) or the all too common approach of simply rejecting the paper and placing the author on a form of secret black list, so that the scientific community remains unaware of the issue or the attempt to mislead. COPE's code of conduct for editors states amongst other things that editors should "ensure the integrity of the academic record" by a prompt correction and with due prominence, and "if, after an appropriate investigation, an item proves to be fraudulent, it should be retracted". After three such cases in our first 8 months of the new policy fortunately there have been none for the last 12 months.

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We have revised our required statement of ethical publishing which is printed in the table below:

Table: Principles of Ethical Publishing in the International Journal of Cardiology:

1. That the corresponding author has the approval of all other listed authors for the submission and publication of all versions of the manuscript.
2. That all people who have a right to be recognised as authors have been included on the list of authors and everyone listed as an author has made an independent material contribution to the manuscript.
3. That the work submitted in the manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere and is not presently under consideration of publication by any other journal other than in oral, poster or abstract format.
4. That the material in the manuscript has been acquired according to modern ethical standards and has been approved by the legally appropriate ethical committee.
5. That the article does not contain material copied from anyone else without their written permission.
6. That all material which derives from prior work, including from the same authors, is properly attributed to the prior publication by proper citation.
7. That the manuscript will be maintained on the servers of the Journal and held to be a valid publication by the Journal only as long as all statements in these principles remain true.
8. That if any of the statements above ceases to be true the authors have a duty to notify the journal as soon as possible so that the manuscript can be withdrawn.

Acknowledgement

The authors of this manuscript have certified that they comply with the Principles of Ethical Publishing in the International Journal of Cardiology [5].

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