Publication Integrity and Ethics

PIE (п)

P.I.E. Guidelines for Editorial Board Members

Practice Guidelines

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Summary

• Editorial staff should adhere to a strict code of conduct, aiming to provide accurate, reputable, and original publications that meet all current legislation and quality standards.

• Possible conflicts of interest regarding the authors, reviewers, and team members should be scrutinised, making sure printed material is free from bias whether it be financial, political, ideological, or otherwise.

• Editorial board members should never proffer manipulated or false data in order to consciously mislead the reader.

• The ethical integrity of the publishing industry is a key responsibility of all editorial board members.

• Clear guidelines should be issued to authors and peer reviewers upon expected standards of conduct.

• Confidentiality is a vital aspect of ethical conduct; no information deemed private should ever be shared with anyone outside of the editorial team without the necessary authority and clearance.

• Complaints, criticisms, and calls for amendment should be dealt with immediately and according to set guidelines. Disputes can be forwarded to the PIE for arbitration, where any matters can often be resolved to the contentment of both parties.

Introduction

Editors are the custodians of the publishing world. They hold an exclusive position, enabling them to ensure that the integrity of ethical value is upheld in full and without compromise. As such, all editorial board members should take their responsibilities seriously and act with due consideration, submitting all documents or articles to meticulous scrutiny before sanctioning any written work for publication.

Editorial work is a consistent effort that requires teamwork with both publishers and authors. Only through fostering strict ethical guidelines can a comprehensive level of conduct be maintained across all branches of publishing.

It is impractical to expect a definitive set of principles for all editorial staff in one document; the editorial world is nuanced, vast, and constantly changing. Therefore one of the most essential requirements of all editorial staff is to keep up to date with relevant issues as they arise, using the PIE guidelines as a foundation and informing other staff of new findings.

It is not only the understanding of PIE Guidelines which will help to uphold standards of ethical conduct, but the compliance of editorial staff towards them. Therefore editors and editorial board members are advised to register with PIE, and furthermore encourage their fellow editorial staff members to follow the same practice.

Editorial ethics

1 *Consistency of conduct*

1.1 Editors take full responsibility for the content of their publications and understand the effects that bad practice can have upon society at large. Robust systems should be in place to ensure all published content is correct, checked, and ethically sourced before publication.

1.2 Editorial board members must always balance the informative aspect of published material with public interest and sensibility.

1.3 Editorial staff should abstain from handling and publishing articles that may cause harm or place inequitable emphasis on religion, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, disability or other sensitive matters.

1.4 Inconvenient facts and information must not be censored from written material for the expedience of a document's main proposal, discourse, or viewpoint.

1.5 Editorial staff must not consciously proffer manipulated data and misinformation in the content of their publications.

1.6 When corrections are necessary, the editorial board members are required to take swift action and make the required adjustments immediately.

1.7 If errors of any nature relating to the manuscript handling and publishing activity of an editorial board member are signalled, the editor-in-chief should immediately correct them according to the PIE guidelines. If there was no official complaint, then correcting to the recommendation of the individual who signalled the errors is the required course of action.

1.8 Any limitations that may have had an effect upon the finished content be it conflicting data, financial issues, or inconsistencies, must be relayed to the reader in full detail, to avoid confusion.

1.9 All research, including clinical trials involving humans and animals, must adhere to set ethical and legal legislative standards. Editorial staff should be or able to be in possession of all official certification regarding ethical committees, consent forms, as well as the necessary documentation asserting the ethical and legal sourcing of the data used.

1.10 Editorial board members are part of a wider community and should be active in encouraging consistency in their teams conduct. This can include supporting their publications, attending all board meetings, and acting as a positive ambassador for their organisation.

2 *Independence from outside influence*

2.1 All decisions made by the editorial team must be free from bias and influence, whether it is political, financial, ideological, or otherwise.

2.2 An editor should base their decision making process on the quality of the written content alone and be fully accountable for whichever course of action they decide to take. An environment where commercial considerations and editorial decisions are separate is the ideal to engender ethical conduct.

2.3 Editorial board members should be aware of pricing procedure and aim to promote cost-effective distribution of their material to the widest possible audience. This must be met under the overall banner of maintaining independence from fiscal obligations.

2.4 Any sponsorship or outside funding should be fully and clearly disclosed to the reader within the published article.

2.5 No agreement, whereby a sponsor or funding agent can censor elements within the written content which they consider to be derogatory to their agenda, should be entered unless the information is of a classified nature and has potential security risks. Such an action undermines the integrity of the work immediately, regardless of whether any attempts of censorship are made.

2.6 Editors should endeavour to receive written confirmation of their editorial independence from the publisher's owner prior to taking a position. The only circumstance whereby editorial staff should be released from their role is through gross misconduct, and never for printing material deemed inconvenient by the publisher for political, financial, or ideological reasons.

2.7 Editors should never pressurise authors into citing publications for any other reason than the relevance or scholarly quality of the content.

3 *Responsibility*

3.1 Editorial members of any publication must respect the personal privacy of the individuals involved whilst gathering data, only publishing the information that is considered to be in the public's interest.

3.2 Editorial board members should not invade the privacy of individuals unless they are public figures and the intrusions are related to their public activity.

3.3 All editorial board members who are registered members of PIE should act according to the guidelines of ethical editorial conduct and comply with the basic rules of the publishing sector. They must advise their staff under and around them to support the guidelines as well and follow them accordingly.

3.4 Editors are responsible for all of the data published within the articles they accept for publication.

They must ensure that all the articles are of the utmost quality, grammatically and politically correct, and informative in nature.

3.5 All members of the editorial board must comply with ethical standards; they must be willing to take action as soon as they are aware of misconduct or ethical problems. Articles must be evaluated with objectivity.

3.6 Detailed guidelines should be made available to all authors, clearly stipulating the expected modes of behaviour and quality of authorship. This must include the stipulation of a full report listing all financial contributors along with an in depth analysis as to their involvement. This information should be made clear in the published material to eliminate any question of bias.

3.7 Editors have the responsibility of accurately and truthfully recording the contributions made by separate authors on a collaborative project, insisting on statements from each individual. Under no circumstance should gift or ghost authorship be encouraged, and any changes made to the document must always follow the notification and agreement of all authors and contributors involved. Disputes should be forwarded to PIE for objective arbitration (see below).

3.8 Peer review procedures should be clearly outlined to both authors and reviewers. All chosen reviewers must be checked for any conflicting interests and be suitably qualified with the skills required to review to the relevant standard.

3.9 Documentation relating to all of the above should be signed and up to date. Any uncertainties should be relayed to the Editor-in-chief immediately.

4 *Confidentiality*

4.1 No documents should be shared with the editor of other journals or organisations unless permission is granted or in specific cases of misconduct.

4.2 There is generally no rule obliging editorial staff into submitting articles to lawyers for court cases.

4.3 Confidentiality on the part of the peer reviewer and author must be stressed. Systems should be in place to monitor the actions of the reviewer with a consistent line of communication being maintained.

4.4 Robust and up to date security systems should be in place to avoid any data protection breaches in case studies involving humans. Patient confidentiality is a legal requirement and all articles should have the correct consent forms and paper work pertaining to the governing guidelines in the specific area of publication.

4.5 All material under review is confidential and should therefore never be discussed or exposed to anyone outside of the editorial team unless there is a certified reason to do so.

4.6 All members of the editorial board are required to pass on the principle of confidentiality to their co-workers, as well as authors and reviewers. Any breach must be reported immediately to the editor-in-chief.

4.7 Consent forms for any images, quotes, case studies, reports, eye witnesses, or any other personal reference, should be sought before publication. Clear stipulation about the role this information will play must be relayed in full to the relevant person.

5 *Complaints against the publication*

It is vital for editorial staff to concentrate on engendering scholarly debate through quality publication; new and refreshing work draws attention and raises the integrity of the publishing industry at large. This will of course entail comments, constructive criticism, and complaints (which should be encouraged as much as possible) that need to be dealt with in a courteous and professional manner.

5.1 When dealing with complaints from third parties, other editors, peer reviewers, publishers, or authors, editorial board members must follow the set PIE channels of communication.

5.2 When a complaint is formulated by an individual through PIE, editorial board members must provide all the information needed for the investigation and guarantee prompt responses to the complainants by taking action and correcting the signalled errors.

5.3 Editors must take action if they suspect misconduct or ethical problems. Every effort must be made to ensure thorough investigations are conducted and addressed directly in order to get an immediate resolution.

5.4 Upon receiving a report pointing out an error in the published work, corrections must be made as soon as is viable. If the error seriously undermines the work as a whole, then it must be withdrawn from publication immediately with a full statement issued. Upon receiving a complaint or criticism, the information should be passed on to the author/authors for a direct, and prompt, response.

5.5 When PIE's Council Sub-Committee recommends retractions to be published by editors, the corrections must be clearly formulated and easily identifiable to all the readers. Even in cases when complaints were not formulated, retractions and corrections must be published as soon as inaccuracies, errors, or misleading information is recognised by the editor.

5.6 When complaints are referred to PIE's Council Sub-Committee, official representatives of the organisation will analyse the matter and verify whether further investigations are required or not. If the Sub-Committee decides to pursue the case, both parties will be informed and asked to provide all evidence of correspondence pertaining to when the matter was dealt with directly and without PIE's mediation.

There are two possible outcomes when PIE's Council Sub-Committee mediates a complaint:
(1) The Sub-Committee decides that the complaint was satisfactorily dealt with according to official recommendations and the PIE Guidelines for good practice.
(2) The Sub-Committee decides that further investigations are required, and advises the editorial board members and the complainant accordingly with the relevant steps.

Contributors

Colin Hopper
Waseem Jerjes
Hiang Boon Tan
Zaed Z R Hamady

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