Publication Integrity and Ethics

PIE (п)

P.I.E. Guidelines for Publishers

Practice Guidelines

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Introduction

Publication Integrity and Ethics (PIE) recommends publishers to register with the organisation in order to gain advice relating to aspects of the publishing industry. The PIE guidelines offer a wealth of detail to which members can obtain clarification on key points such as ethics, avoidance of conflict and establishing best practice.

Whilst PIE does not currently offer direct membership to publishers, these personnel can select to be PIE adherents if they wish. In this instance they would enjoy full access to the PIE organisation and its facilities. In doing so, they must assume the role of guardians of the publishing sector and take action against breaches, misconduct or ethical problems related to the branch.

To maintain the integrity, quality and honesty of the established role model of PIE, all the publishers who are PIE adherents should act according to PIE's guidelines. This includes recommendations for correct editorial conduct; publishers will also be able to support and advise the staff under them to comply with the rules and encourage them to become members of the organisation as well.

1 *Respect of policy*

1.1 Improvement of the publication must be the ultimate aim of publishers and their editorial staff; this will be best achieved by respecting the policies regarding editorial independence, research ethics, authorship and integrity.

1.2 It is imperative that publishers communicate all policies related to the journals they manage to editors, readers, authors and peer-reviewers.

1.3 The policy of a publication must be regularly reviewed; adjustments or renewal of policy must be implemented in a timely manner, according to the revised recommendations of PIE or the changes in the PIE guidelines.

2 *Conflicts of interests*

2.1 No competing interests should exist between publishers and the members of editorial staff.

2.2 There should be no conflicts of interest between authors and the individuals or the organisation they write about.

3 *Confidentiality*

3.1 Publishers should respect the confidentiality of the sources open to them. If it becomes necessary for a publisher to disclose details about an author or a manuscript to other individuals, written consent must first be obtained from the person concerned.

3.2 A publisher must take immediate action if and when an appeal or complaint is formulated in order for an expedient resolution to be reached.

4 *Responding to complaint*

4.1 Publishers must take reasonable steps so that corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies are published as soon as it is possible, whether or not a formal complaint has been lodged against the editorial team.

4.2 If problems or conflicts arise relating to a report of misconduct, editorial error or misinformation, publishers should also endeavour to assist institutions, grant funders, governing bodies and other interested parties responsible for the investigation; they must take swift remedial action to facilitate a resolution of the case.

5 *Fair play and accuracy*

5.1 It is the duty of publishers to ensure that all the materials published within the pages of their journals are informative, balanced and fair.

5.2 Content should also reflect a high degree of accuracy and honesty; it should not misinform readers or attempt to mislead or confuse.

5.3 Rumours and unconfirmed reports should be identified as soon as they arise.

5.4 Data contained within the pages of a particular publication should be based on the informative character of the project in hand, not merely expressed as random opinion.

5.5 Journalistic investigations, including those arising as a result of complaint, inaccuracy or misconduct, must be undertaken with respect for the privacy of individuals and for the sources of information.

5.6 It is in order for publishers to present their own set of values, views and opinions. However, this clause is dependent on relevant data being recorded that is in no way misrepresented or open to misinterpretation.

5.7 Information and data should not be deliberately withheld or suppressed; nor should it be presented on the basis that readers will be informed on which information is presented as truth and which is presented as fiction.

6 *Integrity and moral values*

6.1 Publishers must ensure that no offensive materials are published within the pages of their journals. This denotes: articles, opinions and images that place inequitable emphasis on religion, race, colour, gender, ethnicity, disability, illness, age, sexual orientation and other sensitive topics.

6.2 As with their editors, publishers are required to respect and promote privacy and seek out personal or sensitive information only when it is in the interest of the public.

6.3 Public figures, to a large extent, sacrifice their privacy; this must not be allowed to cause intrusive invasion relating to information regarding their private lives. Privacy of research participants, authors and peer reviewers must be respected.

6.4 Publishers who adhere to PIE have a duty to act in accordance to the PIE guidelines of ethical editorial conduct, advise the staff under them to support and follow the guidelines and register with the organisation. Publishers are required to provide support for editors and authors so that they can follow the proper code of conduct, respect privacy, protect intellectual property and copyright and editorial independence.

7 *Reasonable practice*

7.1 Publishers and the editors they work with are encouraged to follow the PIE Code of Conduct for journal editors and given support to do so.

7.2 It is recommended that individuals involved in publishing should advise the editors and journals they work with to be aware of what their membership of PIE provides and entails.

7.3 The relationship between publisher, editor and other parties in a contract must be clearly defined. Editorial independence should be nurtured: this must embrace research ethics, confidentiality, consent, and the special requirements for human and animal research. Authorship should depict transparency including integrity in research funding, reporting standards, in addition to conflicts of interest and confidentiality.

7.4 Where clinical trials are published in a journal, specific clinical trial registration should be a statutory requirement beforehand. A policy should be indicative of where the information is located within the published article.

7.5 When new analysis of data previously published appears in a report, often displayed as sub group analysis, the primary source of the data must be clearly indicated; there should be full reference to registration and primary publication details.

8 *Consequences of redundant publication*

8.1 Journal editors and readers should be made aware if specific research or a whole article has previously been published. Scientific analysis and data may be severely affected by a scholarly report that is later made redundant.

8.2 Authors must declare if submitted work has been published or being considered for publication elsewhere.

8.3 Whereupon a report is published that is later found to have been published previously, the editor must contact the author for consideration of a redundant publication notice.

8.4 A certain level of duplication may be deemed acceptable and a policy to clarify should be implemented by the journal. Editors must be free to question authors especially with regard to editorials, letters and reviews.

8.5 For Best Practice regarding redundant or multiple publication, instructions from the journal should clarify what is, and what is not, considered to be prior publication.

8.6 Whereupon a document has been accurately translated from another language, the journal may choose to accept the publication in a different language as being non redundant material. Appropriate permission must be sought, however, with confirmation of the original source, acceptance of re-publication and the accuracy of translation.

8.7 If an editor or publisher has concerns about potential redundancy and overlap, they may request copies of pre-published material. However if the article is to be re-published in the same language as the electronic version of the primary publication, to be read by a different group of readers this may require full justification due to the easy access of an electronic article.

Ethical standards in native advertising

Advertorials – or native advertising – have opened up a revenue stream for publishers. As the written words are in the form of straight editorial, carefully balanced as an advert, it has opened up a rift in public confidence. An advertorial may be viewed as an egregious example of journalistic independence.

It is the responsibility of publishers to ensure readers are not brainwashed into seeing the context of native advertising as a commercial advert dressed up as journalistic content. Advertisers must also take a share of the responsibility to consumers that their commercial messages are advertisements and not reported news. If the material blends so well with the in-house style of the publication there is a risk the reader is being deliberately deceived.

A clear disclosure in a published advertorial should alert the reader they are reading content of a commercial nature.

The same applies to comment logs posted directly below an advertorial which may be perceived as undisclosed advertising. Any such disclosure should be conspicuous, reader friendly, clear in meaning and as close to the main claim as possible.

Blogs

The publisher and advertiser have an obligation to ensure that any content that is posted independently by consumers is genuine. If a blog is posted by an advertiser they must clearly and conspicuously indicate it is an advert in order not to mislead consumers who might expect the content of a blog to be authentic material.

Whereupon reviews, testimonials or endorsements are posted, especially when a consumer would not expect a connection between the advertiser and the writer of such content, both parties should disclose the connection.

Open access publishing and copyright

Publishers should endeavour to mention and describe in full on the web site their open access policy. The reader must be able to clearly see what rights they have to copy or use the material displayed. Actively sharing published material with others around the world means you are supporting the free exchange of knowledge. Publishers are also protecting their content from illegal use if they do not wish the work is used for commercial purpose.

A pre-publication quality control should be in place for added reader and potential author trust and the process should be described on the website which should have clear organisation of its material.

An open access policy should declare that the content of the journal is available at no cost to users. It must also state in clear language that users are freely allowed to copy, download, read, print, distribute, search or link to texts in the journal. It should be stated that this can be performed without requesting prior permission from the publisher or author.

Publishers need to be aware of any possible contradictions between their open access-policy and their copyright.

It is important that authors are informed if the journal will be the copyright holder after publication of an article or if the copyright remains with the author.

Licensing can create an additional way of showing in which form a journal is open access; copyright of the published material is required for this or permission from the copyright holder sought. Authors should be clearly informed about the conditions of open access and copyright before submitting their documents (See the Creative Commons website for more detailed information on licensing and copyright).

The journal's aims, scope, presentation of the editorial board, author guidelines, description of the quality control system should be available on its URL to facilitate easy interpretation of information.

Transparency of the editorial board

It increases public trust and credibility if contact can be made with the editor. Editorial board members, their affiliation and contact details should be listed.

Author guidelines

It is important when publishing research papers and scholarly materials that levels of quality control are detailed. Potential contributors should have guidelines that are easy to follow, giving them a clear indication of style, fees and copyright.

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