International Business Review Journal

Ethics in Research & Publication

www.ibrjournal.org

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
GUIDES	
Authorship	2
Competing Interests	5
Plagiarism	7
Simultaneous submission	9
Research fraud	14
Salami slicing	16

Welcome to your Ethics Guide from IBRJ.

Whether you are just starting out in your career or are a more seasoned researcher, you are no doubt very much aware of the importance of ethical conduct.

Plagiarism, research fraud, undisclosed competing interests...these are just a few of the issues that can threaten not only the integrity of the science, but also one's standing in the scientific community. An understanding of the ethical boundaries and 'rules' is paramount to ensuring your work and career get off to the best start possible.

It is with this in mind that the Ethics in Research & Publication Guide was created for early-career researchers by IBRJ and an independent panel of experts, well-versed in ethical issues and how to solve them. The program offers resources to help you navigate sensitive and challenging situations, including a rare glimpse into what it's like to be a victim of misconduct, from those who have experienced it first-hand.

We hope you'll find this program useful as you build your own body of work and reputation in the academic community, and we wish you all best in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stephen Harrison Ph.D.

Stephen Harrison

Editor IBRJ

AUTHORSHIP

Naming authors on a scientific paper ensures that the appropriate individuals get credit, and are accountable, for the research. Deliberately misrepresenting a scientist's relationship to their work is considered to be a form of misconduct that undermines confidence in the reporting of the work itself.(1)

While there is no universal definition of authorship,(1) an 'author' is generally considered to be an individual who has made a significant intellectual contribution to the study.(2)

Four criteria must all be met to be credited as an author. (2)

- Substantial contribution to the study conception and design, data acquisition, analysis, and interpretation.
- Drafting or revising the article for intellectual content.
- Approval of the final version.
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work.

The following are some general guidelines, which may vary from field to field:

- The order of authorship should be 'a joint decision of the coauthors'.(2)
- Individuals who are involved in a study but don't satisfy the journal's criteria for authorship, should be listed as 'Contributors' or 'Acknowledged Individuals'. Examples include: assisting the research by providing advice, providing research space, departmental oversight, and obtaining financial support.(2,3)
- For large, multi-center trials, the list of clinicians and centers is typically published, along with a statement of the individual contributions made. Some groups list authors alphabetically, sometimes with a note to explain that all authors made equal contributions to the study and the publication.(1,2) Three types of authorship are considered unacceptable:
- 'Ghost' authors, who contribute substantially but are not acknowledged (often paid by commercial sponsors);
- 'Guest' authors, who make no discernible contributions, but are listed to help increase the chances of publication;
- 'Gift' authors, whose contribution is based solely on a tenuous affiliation with a study.(1,3,4)

When not appropriately addressed, authorship issues can lead to dispute. Some disputes are based on misconduct (such as lying about one's role); some stem from questions of interpretation, such as the degree to which a person's CONTRIBUTION can be considered 'substantial,' and if authorship is justified.(1)

Other potential issues could include: being involved in a study, but not listed as an author or contributor; someone taking your idea and publishing a paper claiming full authorship; and finding your name on a publication without your permission. If a complaint is filed over a dispute, an investigation may be conducted with the journal editor and author's institution to reach a resolution.

Because of the potential for ambiguity and confused expectations, it is strongly advised that before the research begins, a meeting take place to document how each person will be acknowledged.

Issues around authorship can be complex and sensitive. Early career researchers who encounter such situations may fear they will jeopardize their reputation and career if they speak up.(1) Take the time to fully understand each journal's guidelines for authorship, and industry requirements.

If you find yourself in a challenging situation that you are not sure how to handle, consult with a trusted mentor or supervisor.

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- 4. World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) policy statement on ghost writing initiated by commercial companies. Available at: wame. org/policy-statements#Ghost Writing ghost. Accessed on February 14, 2019.

Action	What is it?	Is it unethical?	What should you do?
Misrepresenting a scientist's relationship to their work	Listing names of people who took little or no part in the research, omitting names of people who did take part, 1 or the 'ordering of a byline that indicates a greater level or participation in the research than is warranted'. 3 This includes submitting a manuscript without the permission of an author/contributor. 1	Yes. According to ICMJE: 'All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed' Misrepresentation also includes 'ghost,' 'guest' and 'gift' authors. ²	 Review the journal's Instructions for Authors before submitting a paper and beforthright about all contributors. This includes 'substantial' contributions, paid writers, and any others who contributed to the study. To avoid disputes, set clear expectations from the outset about who is doing what and how authorship will be handled. If you feel you have been treated unfairly in regards to authorship, seek the counsel of atrusted advisor.
Ghost Authorship	This usuallyrefers to professional writers (oftenpaid by commercial sponsors) whose role is not acknowledged. Unattributed contributions to data analyses may also constitute ghost authorship. 3	Yes. Not acknowledging a writer's contribution is considered dishonest.	 Professional writers who participated only in drafting of the manuscript and did not have a role in the design or conduct of the study or the interpretation of results should be identified in the acknowledgements section along with information about potential conicts of interest, including whether they were compensated for the writing assistance and, if so, by which entity(ies).³ Consult the authorship guidelines of the journal. Consultother helpful resources including: ICMJE, ² World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), ⁴ European Medical Writers Association (EMWA), ⁵ and the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA). ^{6,3}

	ift and Guest uthorship	Authorship based on a tenuous affiliation with the study or solely on an expectation that inclusion of a particular name will improve the chances that the study will be published.	Yes. Guest and gift authors make no discernible contributions. ³	 Any 'gift' and 'guest' contributions should be vetted prior to submitting a paper. If in doubt about whether a contribution is acceptable or not, consult the authorship guidelines of the journal and the editor.
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*When in doubt, always consult with your professor, advisor, or someone in a position of authority who can guide you to the right course of action.

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- 6. AMWA-EMWA-ISMPP Joint Position Statement on the Role of Professional Medical Writers. Available at: ismpp.org/assets/docs/ Inititives/amwa-emwa-ismpp joint position statement on the role of professional medical writers_january 2017.pdf. Accessed on February 14, 2019.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Transparency and objectivity are essential in scientific research and the peer review process.

When an investigator, author, editor, or reviewer has a financial/personal interest or belief that could affect his/her objectivity, or inappropriately influence his/her actions, a potential competing interest exists. Such relationships are also known as dual commitments, competing interests, or competing loyalties.(1,2) The most obvious competing interests are financial relationships such as:

- Direct: employment, stock ownership, grants, patents.
- Indirect: honoraria, consultancies to sponsoring organizations, mutual fund ownership, paid expert testimony.(2)

Undeclared financial interests may seriously undermine the credibility of the journal, the authors, and the science itself.(2) An example might be an investigator who owns stock in a pharmaceutical company that is commissioning the research.

Competing interests can also exist as a result of personal relationships, academic competition, and intellectual passion. An example might be a researcher who has:

- A relative who works at the company whose product the researcher is evaluating.
- A self-serving stake in the research results (e.g. potential promotion/career advancement based on outcomes).
- Personal beliefs that are in direct conflict with the topic he/she is researching.

Not all relationships represent a true competing interest—conflicts can be potential or actual. (1,2) Some considerations that should be taken into account include: whether the person's association with the organization interferes with their ability to carry out the research or paper without bias; and whether the relationship, when later revealed, make a reasonable reader feel deceived or misled.(3)

Full disclosure about a relationship that could constitute a competing interest—even if the person doesn't

believe it affects their judgment— should be reported to the institution's ethics group and to the journal editor to which a paper is submitted. Most publishers require disclosure in the form of a cover letter and/or footnote in the manuscript.

A journal may use disclosures as a basis for editorial decisions and will publish them as they may be important to readers in judging the manuscript. Likewise, the journal may decide not to publish on the basis of the declared conflict.

According to the U.S. Office of Research Integrity, having a competing interest is not in itself unethical, and there are some that are unavoidable. Full transparency is always the best course of action, and, if in doubt, disclose.

Guide to Declaration of Competing Interests*

Action	What is it?	Is it unethical?	What should you do?
An undisclosed relationship that may pose a competing interest.	Neglecting to disclose a relationship with a person or organization that could affect one's objectivity, or Inappropriately influence one's actions.	Yes. Some relationships do not necessarily present a conflict. Participants in the peer-review and publication process must disclose relationships that could be viewed as potential competing interests. 2	 When submitting a paper, state explicitly whether potential competing interests doordo not exist. Indicate this in the manuscript for single-blind journals or in the title page for double-blind journals. Investigators must disclose potential competing interests to study participants and should state in the manuscript whether they have done so. Reviewers must also disclose any competing interests that could bias their opinions of the manuscript.
An undisclosed funding source that may pose a competing interest.	Neglecting to disclose the role of the study sponsor(s), if any, in study design; in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; in the writing of the report; and in the decision to submit the paper for publication.	Yes. Undeclared financial conflicts may seriously undermine the credibility of the journal, the authors, and the science itself. 2	 When submitting a paper, a declaration (with the heading 'Role of the funding source') should be made in a separate section of the text and placed before the References. Describe the role of the study sponsor(s), if any, in study design; in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; in the writing of the report; and in the decision to submit the paper for publication. Editors may request that authors of a study funded by an agency with a proprietary or financial interest in the outcome sign a statement, such as 'I had full access to all of the data and the accuracy of the data analysis.'²

#When in doubt, always consult with your professor, advisor, or someone in a position of authority who can guide you to the right course of action.

- Office of Research Integrity U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A brief overview on Conflict of Interests. Available at: ori.hhs.gov/plagiarism-35. Accessed on February 14, 2019.
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PLAGIARISM GUIDE

One of the most common types of publication misconduct is plagiarism—when one author deliberately uses another's work without permission, credit, or acknowledgment. Plagiarism takes different forms, from literal copying to paraphrasing some else's work and can include:

- Data
- Words and Phrases
- Ideas and Concepts

Plagiarism has varying different levels of severity, such as:

- How much of someone's work was taken—a few lines, paragraphs, pages, the full article?
- What was copied–results, methods, or introduction section?

When it comes to your work, always remember that crediting the work of others (including your advisor's or your own previous work) is a critical part of the process. You should always place your work in the context of

the advancement of the field, and acknowledge the findings of others on which you have built your research.

Action	What is it?	Is it unethical?	What should you do?
Literal copying	Reproducing a work word for word, in whole or in part, without permission and acknowledgment of the original source.	Yes. Literal copying is only acceptable if you reference the source and put quotation marks around the copied text.	Keeptrack of sources you used while researching and where you used it in your paper. Make sure you fully acknowledge and properly cite the original source in your paper. Use quotation marks around word-for-word text and reference properly.
Substantial copying	This can include research materials, processes, tables, or equipment.	Yes. 'Substantial' can be defined as both quantity and quality of what was copied. If your work captures the essence of another's work, it should be cited.	 Askyourself if yourwork has benefited from the skill and judgment of the original author? The degree to which you answer 'yes' will indicate whether substantial copying has taken place. If so, be sure to cite the original source.

Paraphrasing	Reproducing someone else's ideas while not copying word for word, without permission and acknowledgment of the original source.	Yes. Paraphrasing is only acceptable if you properly reference the source and make sure that you do not change the meaning intended by the source.	 Make sure that you understand whatthe original author means. Never copy and paste words that you do not fully understand. Think about how the essential ideas of the source relate to your own work, untilyou can deliver the information to others without referring to the source. Compare your paraphrasing with the source, to make sure you retain the intended meaning, evenifyou change the words.
Text-recycling	Reproducing portions of an author's own workinapaper, and resubmitting it for publication as an entirely new paper.	Yes. See our separate factsheet on duplicate submission.	 Put anything in quotes that is taken directly from a previously published paper, even if you are reusing something in your own words. Make sure to reference the source accordingly.

*When in doubt, always consult with your professor, advisor, or someone in a position of authority who can guide you to the right course of action.

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, Version 2, 2015. Available at: publicationethics.org/news/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing-revised-and-updated Accessed on February 14, 2019.

^{2.} Elsevier. Publishing Ethics Resource Kit (PERK). Available at: elsevier.com/editors/perk/plagiarism-complaints. Accessed on February 14, 2019.

Simultaneous Submission

Authors have an obligation to make sure their paper is based on original-never before published-research. Intentionally submitting or re-submitting work for duplicate publication is considered a breach of publishing ethics.

- Simultaneous submission occurs when a person submits a paper to different publications at the same time, which can result in more than one journal publishing that particular paper.
- Duplicate/multiple publication occurs when two or more papers, without full cross-reference, share essentially the same hypotheses, data, discussion points, and/or conclusions.(1) This can occur in varying degrees: literal duplication, partial but substantial duplication, or even duplication by paraphrasing.(2)

One of the main reasons duplicate publication of original research is considered unethical, is that it can result in 'inadvertent double-counting or inappropriate weighting of the results of a single study, which distorts the available evidence'.(3)

There are certain situations in which the publishers of two journals might agree in advance to use the 'duplicate work'.(3)

These include:

- Combined editorials (e.g. about a plagiarism case involving the two journals).
- (Clinical) guidelines, position statements.
- Translations of articles—provided that prior approval has been granted by the first Publisher, and that full and prominent disclosure of its original source is given at the time of submission.(2)

The main rule of thumb: articles submitted for publication must be original and must not have been submitted to any other publication. At the time of submission, authors must disclose any details of related papers (also when in a different language), similar papers in press, and translations.

While the boundaries around duplicate publication may vary from field to field, all publishers have requirements for submitting papers. It's a good idea to make sure you fully understand them to avoid violating the process.

Guide to Duplicate Submission/Publication and How to Prevent It*

Action	What is it?	Is it unethical?	What should you do?
Simultaneous submission	Submitting a paper to two or more journals at the same time.	Yes Submission is not permitted as long as a manuscript is under review with another journal.	 Avoidsubmitting a paper to more than one publication at a time. Evenifasubmitted paper is currently under review and you do not know the status, wait to hear back from the publisher before approaching another journal, and then only if the first publisher will not be publishing the paper.

Duplicate publication	When an author submits a paper or portions of his or her own paper that has been previously published to another journal, without disclosing prior submission(s).	Yes	 Avoid submitting a previously published paper for consideration in another journal. Avoid submitting papers that describe essentially the same research to more than one journal. Always provide full disclosure about any previous submissions (including meeting presentations and posting of results in registries) that might be regarded as duplicate publication.³ This should include disclosing previous publication of an abstract during the proceedings of meetings.¹
Duplication by Paraphrasing or 'Text- recycling'	When an author writes about his or her own research in two or more articles from different angles or on different aspects of the research without acknowledgment of the original paper.	Yes Creating several publications from thesameresearch, is considered manipulative. See our separate factsheeton plagiarism/ text recycling.	 Putanything in quotes that is taken directly from a previously published paper, even if you are reusing something in your own words. Make sure to reference the source accordingly.
Translations of a paper published in another language	Submitting a paper to journals in different languages without acknowledgment of the original paper.	Yes. Translated articles are acceptable when all necessary consents have been obtained from the previous publisher of the paper in any other language and from any other person who might own rights in the paper.	 If you want to submit your paper to journal that is published in a different country or a different language, ask the publisher if this is permissible. At the time of submission, disclose any details of related papers in a different language, and any existing translations.

 $^{^{*}}$ When in doubt, always consult with your professor, advisor, or someone in a position of authority who can guide you to the right course of action.

- Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing, Version 2, 2015. Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Available at: publicationethics.org/news/principles-transparency-and-best-practice-scholarly-publishing-revised-and-updated. Accessed on February 14, 2019.
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- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Publishing and Editorial Issues Related to Publication in Biomedical Journals: Overlapping Publications. Available at: icmje.org/ recommendations/browse/publishing-and-editorial-issues/overlapping-publications.html. Accessed on February 14, 2019.

Research Fraud

Research fraud is publishing data or conclusions that were not generated by experiments or observations, but by invention or data manipulation. There are two kinds in research and scientific publishing:

- Fabrication. Making up research data and results, and recording or reporting them. (1)
- Falsification. Manipulating research materials, images, data, equipment, or processes. Falsification includes changing or omitting data or results in such a way that the research is not accurately represented. (1) A person might falsify data to make it fit with the desired end result of a study.

Both fabrication and falsification are serious forms of misconduct because they result in a scientific record that does not accurately reflect observed truth.

Certain instances of fraud can be easy to spot–for example if a referee knows for a fact that a particular laboratory does not have the facilities to conduct the research that was published. Or, if it's obvious an image looks manipulated or is made up from several different experiments. The data from the control experiments might be 'too perfect'. In such situations, an investigation would be conducted to determine if an act of fraud was committed. (3) Digital image enhancement is acceptable.

However, a positive relationship between the original data and the resulting image must be maintained to avoid creating unrepresentative data or the loss of meaningful signals. If a figure has been significantly manipulated, you must note the nature of the enhancements in the figure legend or in the 'Materials and Methods' section.

What about unintentional error that comes across as misconduct? According to the U.S. Office of Research Integrity, research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion. (1) But it's best never to have the integrity of your work come into question.

As a researcher and author, it is essential to understand what constitutes appropriate data management (including data collection, retention, analysis and reporting) in accordance with responsible conduct of research. (4)

To help prevent fraud, most publishers have strict policies on manipulation of images and access to the reported data. It's a good idea to familiarize yourself with them before you submit a paper.

Some general guidelines (which may vary from field to field, publisher to publisher) include: (5)

Manipulation of images

- Images may be manipulated for improved clarity only.
- No specific feature within an image may be enhanced, obscured, moved, removed, or introduced.
- Adjustments of brightness, contrast, or color balance are usually acceptable as long as they do not obscure
 or eliminate any information present in the original.

Data access & retention

- Authors may be asked to provide the raw data in connection with a paper for editorial review. Therefore all data for a specific paper should be retained for a reasonable time after publication. There should be a named custodian for the data.
- Studies undertaken in human beings,
 e.g. clinical trials have specific guidelines about the duration of data retention.

Action	What is it?	Is it unethical?	What should you do?
Manipulating data	Intentionally modifying, changing, or omitting data.	Yes. Comprehensive guidelines on data management and ethical handling of digital images, can be found at The Office of Research Integrity. http://ori.hhs.qov/images/ddblock/data.pdf	 Never tamper with or change data. Keep meticulous records of your data. Records of raw data should be accessible in case an editor asks for them-even after your paper has been published. Understand the publisher's policies on data before you submit a paper.
Manipulating data images	This can include research materials, processes, tables, or equipment.	Yes. Your manuscript may be rejected if the original data are not presented or misrepresented.	 Ifyouneedto adjust an image to enhance clarity, make sure you know what is considered acceptable before submitting your paper. Even if the image manipulations are considered acceptable, reportitto the publication prior to submitting your paper. Reviewany data images used to support your paper against the original image data to make sure nothing has been altered.

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Salami Slicing

The 'slicing' of research that would form one meaningful paper into several different papers is called 'salami publication' or 'salami slicing'. (1)

Unlike duplicate publication, which involves reporting the exact same data in two or more publications, salami slicing involves breaking up or segmenting a large study into two or more publications. These segments are referred to as 'slices' of a study. (2)

As a general rule, as long as the 'slices' of a broken up study share the same hypotheses, population, and methods, this is not acceptable practice. The same 'slice' should never be published more than once. (3)

The reason: according to the U.S. Office of Research Integrity, salami slicing can result in a distortion of the literature by leading unsuspecting readers to believe that data presented in each salami slice (i.e., journal article) is derived from a different subject sample. (2) This not only skews the 'scientific database' but it creates repetition that wastes readers' time as well as the time of editors and reviewers, who must handle each paper separately. Further, it unfairly inflates the author's citation record

There are instances where data from large clinical trials and epidemiological studies cannot be published simultaneously, or are such that they address different and distinct questions with multiple and unrelated endpoints. In these cases, it is legitimate to describe important outcomes of the studies separately. (1,4,5) However each paper should clearly define its hypothesis and be presented as one section of a much larger study. (3)

Most journals request that authors who either know or suspect a manuscript submitted for publication represents fragmented data should disclose this information, as well as enclose any other papers (published or unpublished) that might be part of the paper under consideration. (2.5)

Guide to SALAMi Slicing And How to Prevent It*

Action	What is it?	Is it unethical?	What should you do?
Breaking up or segmenting data from a single study and creating different manuscripts for publication	Publishing small 'slices' of research in several different papers is called 'salami publication' or 'salami slicing'.	Yes. Salami slicing can result in a distortion of the literature by leading unsuspecting readers to believe that data presented in each 'slice' is derived from a different subject sample. 2	Avoidinappropriatelybreakingup datafromasinglestudy intotwoormore papers. When submitting a paper, be transparent. Send copies of any manuscripts closely related to the manuscript under consideration. This includes any manuscripts published, recently submitted, or already accepted. 5

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