

The Editors' Role in Fighting Against Scientific Misconduct (Summary)

Dahong Zhuo, M.D

Editor-in-Chief. Chinese Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine

Professor, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China

In the scientific publishing community of the world, there has been an increasing awareness of journal editors' responsibility for prevention and management of scientific misconduct and conflict of interest.

Scientific misconduct is defined as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences.

In terms of presentation in journals, scientific misconduct particularly includes fabrication or falsification of data, plagiarism, problematic data presentation or analysis, inappropriate claim of authorship, duplicated or salammi publication, and undisclosed conflicts of interest.

The basic roles of journal editors in fighting against scientific misconduct can be summarized as follows:

1. As gatekeepers of the medical literature to maintain an ethical environment without pollution or degradation in medical literature and uphold scientific integrity.
2. As advocates and educators against scientific misconduct, publishing regularly in the journal editorial or other related articles to promote research and publication ethics and to alert the authors to the importance of keeping away from scientific fraud. Meanwhile, the editors are responsible to define and publish practical guidelines for good research ethics listing various types of misconduct in presentation and reporting research findings in an article contributed to the journal. These could be clearly described in the Editor's Instruction to the Authors. In this connection, the editors should be serious and straightforward.
3. As editorial judges when dealing with the manuscripts found with misconducts or suspected misconducts by the peer reviewers or reported by the co-worker of the author. One of the critical managements is to reject the problematic manuscript for publication.
4. As correctors in the capacity of editors to publish the corrections or retractions of the literature already appeared in the journal, when misconduct of the author was detected and verified.
5. As responders and collaborators in resolving the case of scientific misconduct eventually. The editors should inform the author's institution and the granting agency about the misconduct, and, if needed, keep contact or correspondence with other organizations in resolving the fraudulent case.
6. As creators of favorable climate for good scientific publishing. Editors and reviewers themselves should follow the ethics for good scientific publishing aswell, keeping away from misconducts, asking themselves and the authors to disclose conflicts of interests.