Publishing in Journals: Ethical Issues

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Health and safety
Ethics, principles and sustainability
Legal requirements
IPR and copyright
Respect and confidentiality
Attribution and co-authorship
Appropriate practice
Learning outcomes

By the end of this session participants should be able to:

• Explain how research papers come to be published
• Have a clearer understanding of what research misconduct is
• Describe what journal editors expect from authors of papers
• Recognise how to avoid problems when publishing their own research
How are papers published?

✓ Researchers agree who will be the authors

✓ Authors write a paper and submit it to a journal editor

✓ Editors send the manuscript to peer reviewers

✓ Authors receive anonymous peer reviewer comments

✓ Authors re-submit the amended paper to the editor with a declaration of its originality

✓ If accepted the paper is published

✓ The scientific community responds
MMR scare doctor 'acted unethically', panel finds

By Nick Triggle
Health reporter, BBC News

The doctor who first suggested a link between MMR vaccinations and autism acted unethically, the official medical regulator has found.

Dr Andrew Wakefield's 1998 Lancet study caused vaccination rates to plummet, resulting in a rise in measles - but the findings were later discredited.

The General Medical Council ruled he had acted "dishonestly and irresponsibly" in doing his research.

Afterwards, Dr Wakefield said the claims were "unfounded and unjust".

The GMC case did not investigate whether Dr Wakefield's findings were right or wrong, instead it was focused on the methods of research.

During the two-and-a-half years of hearings - one of the longest in the regulator's history - he was accused of a series of charges.

'Callous disregard'

The verdict, read out by panel chairman Dr Surendra Kumar, criticised the way Dr Wakefield "used vulnerable patients as experiment subjects".

Dr Wakefield: "I am extremely disappointed"
The rise in the number of cases of measles in England following the publication of fraudulent research

*figures relate to financial years 1996/97, 1997/98 etc

Source: HPA
Publishing inappropriate or unethical research can....

Damage the reputation of....

- Researchers and their supervisors/ collaborators
- The University, Research Institute and School
- Research Councils or other funding bodies
- The Journals which publish fraudulent or unethical research
- Professional bodies to whom researchers belong (General Medical Council, Institute of Physics, British Psychological Society, Institution of Mechanical Engineers)

- .........And can have serious consequences for the health and wellbeing or financial circumstances of people, companies and society
Research misconduct is:

- Falsification of results/outcomes:
  - Fabrication – ‘making it up’
  - Alteration – ‘changing it’
  - Omission – ‘leaving it out’

- Deception about methods

- Dishonesty about authorship:
  - Plagiarism or piracy – ‘stealing others’ work’
  - Misattribution – ‘including people or leaving them out’

- Failure to safeguard the safety and well being of others during the conduct of the research

- Failure to avoid or disclose a conflict of interest
Publishing ethics

✓ Data fabrication
✓ Image manipulation
✓ Self plagiarism and text recycling
✓ Duplicate submission and publication
✓ ‘Gift’ and ‘ghost’ authorship
✓ Undeclared conflicts of interest

NB. Errors are not treated in the same way by editors
What is Plagiarism?

According to Rozakis (2007) plagiarism is:

- Using someone else’s ideas without acknowledging the source
- Paraphrasing someone else’s argument as your own
- Presenting someone else’s line of thinking in the development of an idea as if it were your own
- Presenting an entire paper or a major part of it developed exactly as someone else’s line of thinking
- Arranging your ideas exactly as someone else did—even though you acknowledge the source(s) in parentheses

See: http://www.deltastate.edu/academics/libraries/library-guides/roberts-laforge-guides/plagiarism-prevention-a-guide-for-students/
Common reasons why people plagiarise (Day, 2013):

- Not understanding what plagiarism is
- Not having practised sufficiently the skills of paraphrasing and quoting
- Not knowing how to cite and reference appropriately
- Lacking confidence or the ability to explain the work of others in their own words
- Lacking the confidence or ability to develop their own argument
- Not giving themselves enough time to read and understand sources and weave them into their own argument
- Avoiding plagiarism requires a wide range of skills, from general (good time management) to very specific (paraphrasing and quoting appropriately, with accompanying citations and references)
What is Ghostwriting/ Guest writing?

Medical ghostwriters are employed by pharmaceutical companies and medical-device manufacturers to produce apparently independent manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals, conference presentations and other communications. Physicians and other scientists are paid to attach their names to the manuscripts as though they had authored them. BUT the named authors may have had little or no involvement in the research or writing process.

"Guest authoring“ or “Gift authoring” refers to being named as an author without having made substantial contributions.

(Sismondo, S. Ghost Management: How Much of the Medical Literature Is Shaped Behind the Scenes by the Pharmaceutical Industry? https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1989751/ accessed 1 July 2016)
Some papers are retracted after publication

- By authors – who contact the editor to say that they have not been able to reproduce their own results

- Authors sometimes write a letter to the Journal - published by the Journal - in the form of a Correction

- This is how science moves forward and this is a healthy part of the process – correcting errors
Retraction of an interpretation

We wish to make it clear that in this paper no causal link was established between MMR vaccine and autism as the data were insufficient. However, the possibility of such a link was raised and consequent events have had major implications for public health. In view of this, we consider now is the appropriate time that we should together formally retract the interpretation placed upon these findings in the paper, according to precedent. \(^4\)

Duties of Authors

✓ Reporting standards and conventions
✓ Data access and retention
✓ Originality and plagiarism
✓ Multiple, redundant and concurrent publication
✓ Appropriate acknowledgement of sources
✓ Hazards and human or animal subjects
✓ Disclosure and conflicts of interest
✓ ............including: suggested reviewers must have no conflicts of interest
Remember that:

Your research findings won’t be publishable without ethical approval for your research and

Once they are published the copyright no longer belongs to you
What is important to editors?

- Who did the research?
- Is it original?
- Is there evidence of salami slicing?
- Who funded the research?
- What resources were received?
- Is there any other relationship or other activity that the reader could perceive to have influenced or that give the appearance of potentially influencing what you wrote in the article

eg. Doctors receiving gifts and hospitality from drug companies
Authors who submit an article for publication:

• Sign a form to transfer copyright to the publisher
• (.....and remember that that document no longer belongs to them)
• Make a declaration that the work is original
• State that they have obtained permission to use any figures/ data or other material from the works of others
• Make sure they do not include people as authors who do not meet the criteria for authorship
What are publishers doing?

Ithenticate – software used to help publishers to identify similarities between an article and previously published articles
Sources

- Publishing Your Research 101: Episode 5 p1. Ethical Considerations for Authors.  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yny_gcvTJv4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yny_gcvTJv4)

- Academic integrity – University of York- [http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/integrity.html](http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/integrity.html)

- Avoiding plagiarism – what is it? How to avoid it: [http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/plagiarism.html](http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/plagiarism.html)

- Paraphrasing, summarising and synthesis – what are these? [http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/plagiarism.html](http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/plagiarism.html)

- Academy of Research Plagiarism Policy: [http://www.academyofresearch.co.uk/plagiarism-policy/](http://www.academyofresearch.co.uk/plagiarism-policy/)


Questions?

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