



## **Tehran University of Medical Sciences- Statement on Publication Ethics**

1. Research is “the systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of hypothetical propositions about the presumed relations among natural phenomena.”<sup>1</sup> Medical research is especially important since its findings can affect the lives of people and the health of populations. Thus, it is necessary to ensure the integrity of the data and analyses presented as medical research. This integrity, not only includes issues such as research design, implementation and analysis, but also extends to its recording and publication. This statement shows the commitment of Tehran University of Medical Sciences at the highest level of administration to publication ethics. In composing this document, guidelines from COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)<sup>2</sup>, ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors)<sup>3</sup>, and WAME (World Association of Medical Editors)<sup>4</sup> have been used.

2. Ethical approval is a mandatory part of any research involving people, medical records, anonymised human tissues or live animals, as explained by Declaration of Helsinki and other recognized statements. Such ethical approval should be issued by appropriate research ethics committees. In Tehran University of Medical Sciences, TUMS Institutional Review Board (IRB), which runs under the supervision of the Vice-Chancellor for Research, is the core body responsible for this approval. Other IRB’s in research centers and schools, also have the authority to act as indicated by regulations. The approval of the appropriate IRB should be mentioned in the manuscripts and the details of patient consent and other related issues must be clearly defined in the research proposals, and briefed in published study outputs.

3. It is of utmost importance to note that the ultimate liability of any publication, its correctness and the validity of all its statements, including those related to research ethics, is on the author(s). Thus careful and unbiased recognition of all illegible authors, based solely on their

intellectual contribution to research output, is vital. A number of internationally-accepted standards and guidelines are available from ICMJE and WAME. All in all, the authors should have participated enough to be able to accept responsibility for the integrity of (at least part of) the manuscript. They should be ready to explain the contribution of each person in the final publication. The order of authors, although usually determined by agreement, roughly reflects the role of each person involved, with the corresponding author being the one who accepts the responsibility of research team and the integrity of the whole manuscript. The order of names must be agreed upon based on individuals contribution to the current publication, and not on their status, previous works etc. Guest authorship (naming individuals not involved in the intellectual aspects of the research) or ghost authorship (dropping the names of those with a considerable amount of intellectual contribution) should be avoided. Where possible, it is recommended to draft an authorship proposal when starting research project. The University administration commits itself to taking appropriate steps whenever it receives a provable report of misconduct in authorship.

4. Any personal, commercial, academic and particularly financial relationship which can potentially influence the conduct and publication of research constitutes a conflict of interests. In such cases the authors must report such relationships in the manuscript.

5. “Published studies do not need to be repeated unless further confirmation is required.”<sup>5</sup> Thus re-publication and re-submission of all or substantial part of a previously-published (or submitted) article is not acceptable. Exceptions include publication of abstracts as part of research presentation in seminars and congresses, and publication in another language. In these cases international standards allow some freedom provided full disclosure is observed.

6. By publishing an article under their name, author(s) of a manuscript claim the scientific contents and text as being their own brainchild. The use of other people’s ideas or sentences in the name of original research output is against scientific integrity and is a serious misconduct called plagiarism. Apart from full-referencing and appreciation of the source, the text should not suggest the possibility of having been copied from other published or unpublished material. Exceptions include common knowledge and the use of quotes. Tehran University of Medical

Sciences emphatically tries to prevent any form of plagiarism, and depending on the seriousness, the degree of plagiarism and the context, will decide on its consequences.

7. The forging of research data (fabrication), either in part or as a whole, willful distortion of data or analyses (falsification), and reporting methods not actually used are all instances of scientific fraud. In cases of possible fraud, the University may request appropriate documents, such as datasets, patients' records, details of analysis outputs etc. to investigate and make appropriate decisions about the people involved.

8. Journal editors must be fully aware of their crucial role in the promotion and implementation of ethical conduct. Apart from ethical codes of conduct and guidelines, Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)<sup>2</sup> has a series of algorithms and flowcharts for editors. Even if editors find these materials not exactly fulfilling their goals, it is essential that every journal should have a clear statement regarding their approach to possible cases of publication misconduct and publish their stance in this regard. They should also seek copyright transfer, declarations of originality, conflicts of interest, and clear statements indicating that the manuscript is neither duplicate nor plagiarized. Such practice both will increase awareness and can be used if further action on a case is necessary. Tehran University of Medical Sciences, not only demands its affiliated journals to take up such stances, but also encourages actions taken to prevent or correct unethical publication, including rejection of papers, warnings, sanctions against people with proven records of misconduct, publishing corrections or "statements of concern", and reporting such instances to University authorities. In doing so, caring for individuals' interests and personal tolerance should not interfere with matters that can endanger scientific integrity and the trust in medical publication. The University has always been happy to work with other journals too in this regard, and will take necessary steps to investigate and making decisions in such cases.

9. The IRB of Tehran University of Medical Sciences is the body responsible for investigating and making decisions in cases of publication misconduct.

## References

1. Kerlinger, F.N., Foundations of Behavioral Research, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc ., 1964 . p . 13 .
2. <http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/>
3. <http://www.icmje.org/>
4. <http://wame.org/>
5. Committee on Publication Ethics. Guidelines on Good Publication Practice. URL: <http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/guidelines/reports/2003/2003pdf15.pdf> [accessed 23 July, 2007].