

EDITORIAL

Fraud in scientific publishing

A number of high-profile cases of alleged fraud in publishing scientific research results over the past decade (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/106186.stm>) has led to initiatives to address these issues, such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (<http://www.publicationethics.org.uk/about>) and The Office of Research Integrity (ORI) (<http://ori.dhhs.gov/>).

ORI, located in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), promotes integrity in biomedical and behavioral research supported by the U.S. Public Health Service at about 4000 institutions worldwide. ORI monitors institutional investigations of research misconduct and facilitates the responsible conduct of research through educational, preventive, and regulatory activities. Nevertheless, cases of alleged research fraud still hit the headlines, including some serious examples quite recently. These cases make the headlines because they are important to the public by potentially undermining the scientific endeavor.

Experts have stated that it is the shared responsibility of institutions, funding agencies, principal investigators and journal editors to prevent such research fraud (<http://www.apa.org/monitor/feb02/fraud.html>), and one scientist has stated that 'It's time for editors to start being much more careful about what they publish' (http://theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,1795618023289,00.html).

In a proactive effort to address, in part, the issue of scientific research fraud, *Oral Diseases* has therefore applied to align with The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) and its policies. The ICMJE is a group of general medical journal editors whose participants meet annually and fund their work on the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts.

The history of this group started when some editors of general medical journals met informally in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, in 1978 to establish guidelines for the format of manuscripts submitted to their journals. The group became known as the Vancouver Group and its requirements for manuscripts, including formats for bibliographic references developed by the

National Library of Medicine, were published in 1979. The Vancouver Group expanded and evolved into the ICMJE, which meets annually.

The ICMJE gradually broadened its concerns to include ethical principles related to publication in biomedical journals, and has produced multiple editions of the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals and a number of Separate Statements on editorial policy. The entire Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals document was revised in 1997; sections were updated in 1999 and 2000. In 2001, the ICMJE revised the sections related to potential conflict of interest. In 2003, the ICMJE revised and reorganized the entire document and incorporated the Separate Statements into the text. This version was fully prepared and published in 2005. The ICMJE member group which approved the 2005 version includes *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *British Medical Journal*, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, *Croatian Medical Journal*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, *The Dutch Medical Journal* (*Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde*), *New England Journal of Medicine*, *New Zealand Medical Journal*, *The Lancet*, *The Medical Journal of Australia*, *Tidsskrift for Den Norske Laegeforening*, *Journal of the Danish Medical Association* (*Ugeskrift for Laeger*), and the *U.S. National Library of Medicine*. Additionally, many other journals have chosen to align themselves with the ICMJE and its policies, such as *Oral Diseases* has now done (see the website [<http://www.ICMJE.org>] and click on URM Journals). The official version of the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals is also located at this website.

We believe that this strong step is necessary to assure both the professional readership of *Oral Diseases*, and patients with oral diseases, that we will make every effort to only publish manuscripts adhering to the highest ethical standards.

**Crispian Scully &
Bruce Baum**

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