



**Publishing  
Connect**

Partnering with the Global Research Community

# **Responsibilities, Challenges, and Tips from an Editor's perspective**

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# Where do these slides come from?

- We want to start our talk by acknowledging the help we received preparing for this presentation.
- We are grateful that our journals' publisher and our colleagues were willing to share their slides with us.

# Outline of Presentation

- Why be a reviewer
- What makes a good reviewer
- How to be a good reviewer
- What an editor wants from a reviewer
- Ethical considerations
- When are you the wrong reviewer

# Poll Question #1

Are you a Career Development  
Awardee?

Answer Yes or No

# Poll Question #2

What is your experience reviewing manuscripts for journals?

Answers

0

1-2

3-4

More than 5

# Why is this important for a Career Development Awardee?

- More protected time to publish
- Expectation that you publish during your CDA
- As part of your CDA, you should serve as a reviewer
- Once you have experience serving as a reviewer, you may also be asked to serve as a Deputy Editor

# Why Become a Reviewer?

- Professional advancement
  - Stay on top of your field
  - Network with editors
- Social responsibility
  - Expected service to journals where you publish
  - “Guardian of the literature”
  - Help your Society’s flagship journal

# Reviewing and Your Career

- Sharpen skills
  - Best way to maintain critical appraisal skills
  - Learn to write better– apply what you like and don't like to your own writing
- Promotion and Tenure
  - Probably, in all honesty, not that important unless notably commended or frequent for top-tier journals
  - But looks bad if you don't do it

# Reviewing and Your Life

- Personal enjoyment
- A relatively manageable (time-wise) diversion from the usual grind
- Like going to meetings, you learn about the latest research

# Reviewing and the Scientific Community

- Publication of valid data is vital to academic and evidence-based medicine
- Optimistically, each article averages 5 or so peer reviews prior to publication
- It's your responsibility as a member of the academic medicine community
  - To make sure that valid clinical studies get published so that patient care can improve
  - That good papers improve through critique
  - And that invalid ones don't get published

# What Makes a Good Reviewer?

- Expertise in one or more areas of paper
  - Clinical
  - Methodological
- No conflicts of interest
- Familiarity with the Journal and what kind of work it publishes
- Able to write a good critique
  - Accurate, Readable, Constructive
- Reliable and timely in returning reviews

# Reviewer Behavior

- Declare conflicts of interest
- Manuscript = confidential document
- Do not use any of the work
- Do not communicate directly with authors

WAME, World Association of Medical Editors  
<http://www.wame.org/resources/editor-s-syllabus#reviewers>

# Dilemma #1: Reviewer is too critical or not critical enough

## Solution:

- Avoid dismissive/snotty language
- Identify article goals & address relevant review guidelines
- Read each section carefully
- Separate critique of language & style from methodological issues
- Reread your review before submitting it for tone, typos and clarity

# Dilemmas #2 & #3

Dilemma #2: Reviewer provides too much or too little guidance to authors

## **Solution:**

- Realize that redoing the study or rewriting the paper may not be an option
- The longest reviews are not necessarily the best

Dilemma #3: Reviewer spends too much or too little time on review

## **Solution:**

- Identify the time required and plan ahead

# Dilemmas #4: Reviewer uses too much or too little assistance

## Solution:

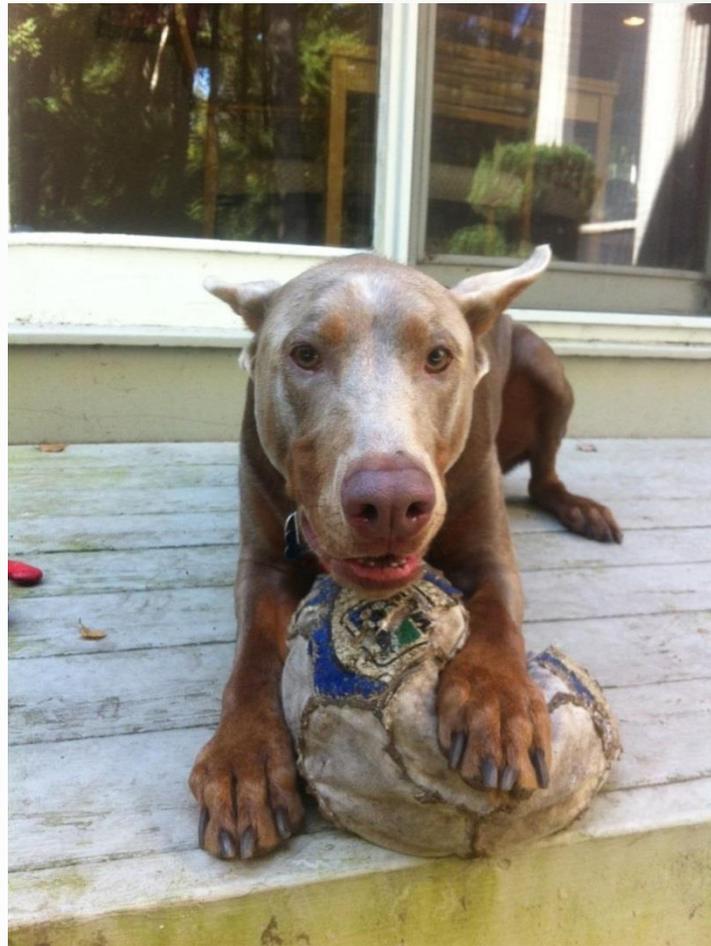
- Collaborate responsibly, not just by delegating
- Ask for help from colleagues or editors (don't be afraid of looking dumb)
- Communicate to the editor if other areas of expertise are needed to evaluate the manuscript

# Dilemma #5: Should reviewer agree to review?

## Solution:

- Agree to review papers for which you have special expertise
- Consider what your yearly load is/should be and accept or decline to review accordingly

# Transition from Chloe to Lori



# Purpose of Peer Review

Check the  
manuscript for:

Mistakes in procedures  
or logic

Conclusions not  
supported by the results

Errors or omissions in  
the references

Compliance with ethics  
standards

Originality and  
significance of the work

# Issues to consider as Reviewers

Importance and Clarity of Research Hypothesis-Is it True?

Originality of work- Is it New? Will it communicate something import to the Journal's readership?

Strengths & weaknesses of methodology, approach & interpretation

Writing style and figure/table presentation

Ethics concerns (animal/human)

# Presentation of the paper

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Writing                                 | Clear and concise English                                      |
| Title                                   | Specific and reflecting the content of the manuscript          |
| Abstract                                | Brief and describing the purpose of the work                   |
| Figures                                 | Justified, clear and legible                                   |
| Tables                                  | Can they be simplified or condensed?<br>Should any be omitted? |
| Trade Names<br>Abbreviations<br>Symbols | Properly used where indicated                                  |

# Quality of the work



Are the methods appropriate and presented in sufficient detail to allow the results to be repeated?



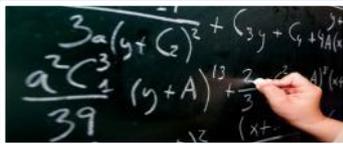
Is the data adequate to support the conclusions?



Do all methods have results?



Have all results been described in the methods?



Are all conclusions based on results?

# Components of a High Quality Review

- Address readability
  - How well is the paper written?
  - Are there errors in grammar/spelling?
  - Will the paper require significant editing?
  - Length, clarity, quality of tables/figures

# Components of a High Quality Review, continued

- Comment on the topic/research question
  - Importance and relevance to audience
  - Originality/novelty
- Quickly check ethics
  - IRB/Conflicts of interest?
- Evaluate methodology
  - Comments on the appropriateness of the methods and design
  - Confounding, bias, analytic techniques
  - Will the paper benefit from statistical review?

# Components of a High Quality Review, continued

- More on methods
  - Very useful to provide precise methodological critique with detailed suggestions on how to improve the paper
- Comment on results and interpretation
  - Do they understand their own data?
  - Are they biased in their interpretation?
  - Did the authors overreach?

# Components of a High Quality Review, continued

- Discussion
  - Did the authors place their results in context?
  - Did they address limitations appropriately?
  - Is the paper novel? Clinically actionable?  
Does it have important implications?
  - Did the conclusions/Implications follow clearly from the study rather than the literature?

# Components of a High Quality Review, continued

- A quick literature search can be useful, particularly if you have questions about novelty of the study
- Carefully review the tables, figures, results to make sure numbers are accurate and sensible
- Make sure the abstract and title agree with the body of manuscript
- Look over references



# What an editor wants from a reviewer

- **Confidential comments to editors**
  - Here is where you can provide your opinion on the overall relevance and importance of the paper
  - Will only be read by the editorial staff, not the authors
  - Area where you can point out whether the paper has “fatal flaws” which you indicated to authors

# Confidential comments to editors, continued

- Be consistent in what you say to authors and what you recommend to editors.
- If you really like the manuscript, identify some of the main strengths
- Add a comment to the editor if you think the manuscript will require significant editing

# Transition from Lori to Chloe



# Privileged Document



Confidential documents where the data is and remains exclusive property of the author(s)



Should not be disclosed to others and kept confidential



After final decision by the editor it must be destroyed



Shared responsibility for the review of the manuscript with a colleague must be disclosed to the editors

# Reviewers

Review manuscripts in area of expertise

Can complete the review on time

Avoid any conflicts of interest

Not allowed to use the data

Provide an honest and critical assessment

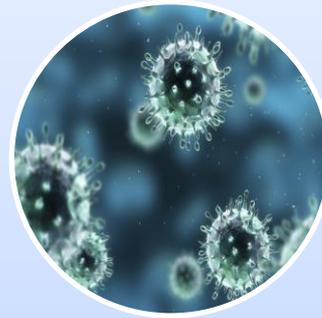
Analyze the strengths & weaknesses



Duplicate  
publication



Plagiarism



Ethics concerns -  
normally  
followed up by  
the Editors and  
Publisher



Data fabrication  
or falsification



**Oversight Function: *Ethics***

# Rejection without external review



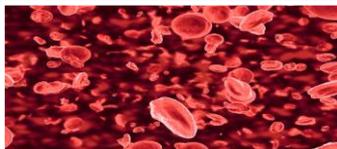
The Editor-in-chief or Deputy Editors evaluates submissions and determines whether they enter into the external review process or are rejected



English language is inadequate



Prior publication of the data



Multiple simultaneous submissions of same data

# Review Process

Articles are initially reviewed by at least two Reviewers

When invited, the Reviewer typically receives the abstract of the manuscript

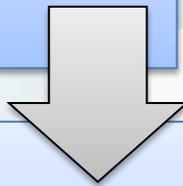
The Editor generally requests that the article be reviewed within 2-4 weeks

Articles are revised until the Reviewers agree, or until the Editor decides that the Reviewer concerns have been adequately addressed

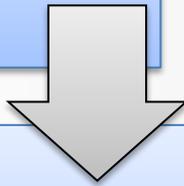
The Reviewers' reports help the Editors to reach a decision on a submitted paper

# Review Process, Continued

If a report has not been received after 4 weeks,  
the editorial office contacts the Reviewer



If there is a notable disagreement between the  
reports of the Reviewers, a third Reviewer may  
be consulted



The anonymity of the Reviewers is  
maintained, unless a Reviewer asks the Editor  
to have their identity made known

# Review Process, Continued

Reviewers must not communicate directly  
with Authors

All manuscripts and materials must be treated  
confidentially by Editors and Reviewers

The aim is to have a first decision to the authors by  
4-16 weeks (depending on the field) after  
submission

Meeting the schedule objectives requires a  
significant effort by all involved

Reviewers should treat Authors as they themselves  
would like to be treated

# The most serious issues to avoid



## **Fabrication**

Making up research data



## **Falsification**

Manipulation of existing research data



## **Plagiarism**

Previous work taken and passed off as one's own

These are the 3 most common forms of ethical misconduct that the research community is challenged with

# Originality and ethical conduct

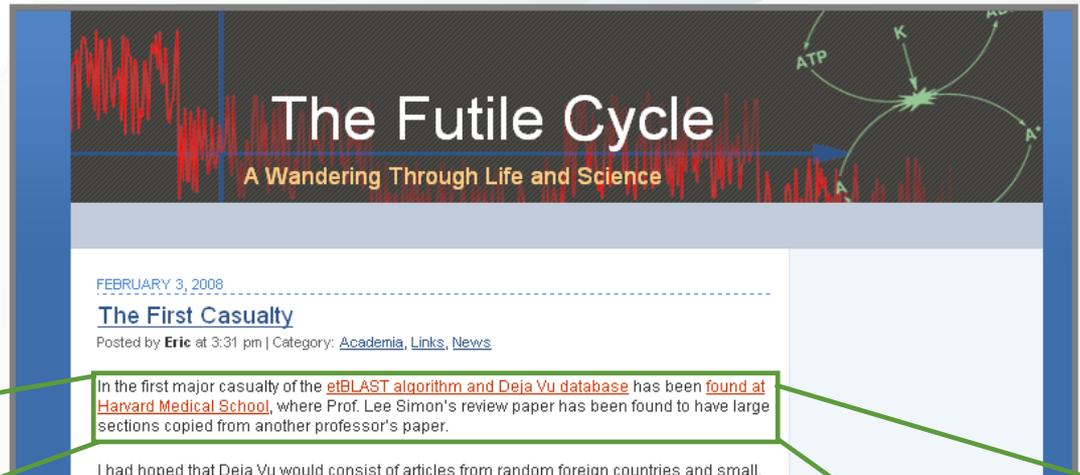
Unethical behavior by Researchers degrades the scientific record and the reputation of science and medicine in the broader community. It can unfairly affect the reputation and academic record of individual researchers/authors.

## A Massive Case Of Fraud Chemical & Engineering News February 18, 2008

Journal editors are left reeling as publishers move to rid their archives of scientist's falsified research

### William G. Schulz

A CHEMIST IN INDIA has been found guilty of plagiarizing and/or falsifying more than 70 research papers published in a wide variety of Western scientific journals by documents first obtained by Chemical & Engineering News. The incident is an outrageous



**The Futile Cycle**  
A Wandering Through Life and Science

FEBRUARY 3, 2008

**The First Casualty**  
Posted by Eric at 3:31 pm | Category: [Academia](#), [Links](#), [News](#)

In the first major casualty of the [etBLAST algorithm and Deja Vu database](#) has been [found at Harvard Medical School](#), where Prof. Lee Simon's review paper has been found to have large sections copied from another professor's paper.

I had hoped that Deja Vu would consist of articles from random foreign countries and small,

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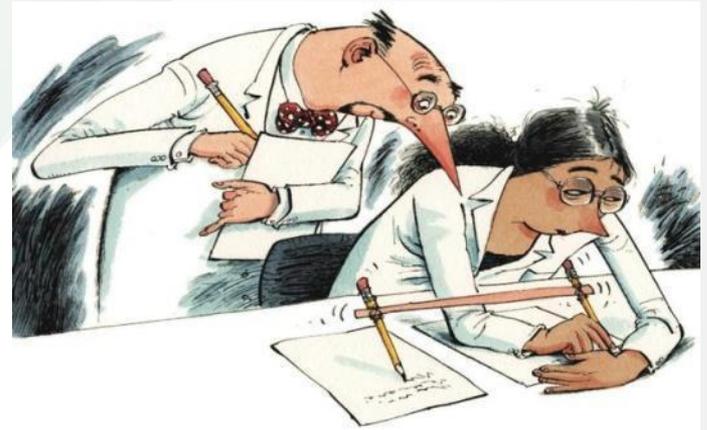
# What is Plagiarism?

“Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, including those obtained through confidential review of others’ research proposals and manuscripts.”

Federal Office of Science and Technology Policy, 1999

“Presenting the data or interpretations of others without crediting them, and thereby gaining for yourself the rewards earned by others, is *theft*, and it eliminates the motivation of working scientists to generate new data and interpretations.”

Professor Bruce Railsback  
Department of Geology, University of Georgia



M. Errami & H. Garner, A tale of two citations  
*Nature* 451 (2008): 397-399

# Correct Citation is Key

Crediting the work of others (including your advisor's or your own previous work) by citation is important for at least three reasons:



To place your own work in context



To acknowledge the findings of others on which you have built your research



To maintain the credibility and accuracy of the scientific literature

# Transition from Chloe to Lori



# Conflicts of Interest



Indicate if any of the following are examples of conflicts of interest:

1. A University Researcher, who owns stock in a large oil company, conducts an experiment on the environmental effects of oil drilling.
2. A University Researcher, who is developing and testing a new technology, is also a consultant for a financial services firm that weighs investments in new technologies.
3. A Researcher submits an article to a journal for which the Editor-in-Chief is a Professor in the Researcher's department.
4. A Doctor who abides by traditional healing procedures writes a paper on emerging current medical technologies.

# Conflicts of Interest

## These Are All Present Potential Conflicts

They can take many forms:

**Direct Financial** - employment, stock ownership, grants, patents

**Indirect Financial** - honoraria, consultancies, mutual fund ownership, expert testimony

**Career & Intellectual** - promotion, direct rival

**Institutional**

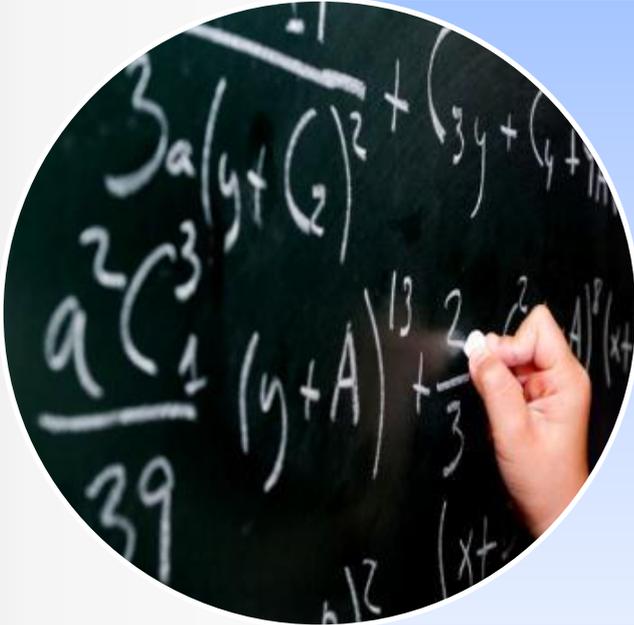
**Personal Belief**

The proper way to handle potential conflicts of interest is through transparency and disclosure.

At the journal level, this means disclosure of the potential conflict in your cover letter to the Journal Editor



# Authorship



A researcher completes her paper. Along the way she consulted her advisor for guidance on the experiment, the data analysis and writing and revising the final article.

A professor in India assisted her in analyzing the data only. A lab assistant helped her in preparing the experimental design and maintaining and operating the equipment. Two fellow grad students read her paper and edited it, though they had no hand in the experiment.

Who is listed as an Author?

Who is listed first?

# Authorship

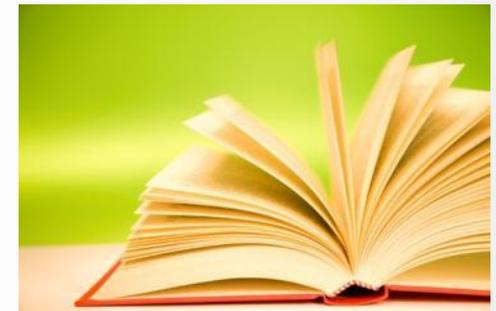
## Policies To Address Authorship Can Vary

Example, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (aka Vancouver Group) declared that an author must:

1. **substantially contribute to conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data**
2. **draft the article or revise it critically for important intellectual content**
3. **give their approval of the final version to be published**
4. **all 3 conditions must be fulfilled to be an author**

**Applying this set of policies to our example, only the researcher and her advisor would qualify as authors**

**All others would qualify as “Acknowledged Individuals”**



# Authorship: Order & Abuses

## General principles for who is listed first:

### First Author:

- conducts and/or supervises the data analysis and the proper presentation and interpretation of the results
- puts paper together and submits the paper to journal

### Co-Author(s):

- makes intellectual contributions to the data analysis and contributes to data interpretation
- reviews each paper draft
- must be able to present the results, defend the implications and discuss study limitations

## Abuses to be avoided:

### Ghost Authors:

- leaving out authors who should be included

### Scientific Writers and Gift Authors:

- including authors when they did not contribute significantly

# Consequences



A researcher has plagiarized another author's article  
What are the potential consequences and what actions can the publisher or researcher's institution/funding body take?

Potential consequences can vary according to the severity of the misconduct and the standards set by the journal editors, institutions and funding bodies.

Possible actions include:

- **Written letters of concern and reprimand**
- **Article retractions**
- **Some form of disciplinary action on the part of the researcher's institute or funding body**



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# Thank You

For further information please visit:

[www.elsevier.com/reviewers](http://www.elsevier.com/reviewers)

For more author training webcasts please visit:

[www.elsevier.com/trainingwebcasts](http://www.elsevier.com/trainingwebcasts)





## Questions & Comments

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