

Ethical Policies and Procedures

Authorship

The Editors of the journals of the American Physiological Society (APS) expect each author to have made an important scientific contribution to the study and to be thoroughly familiar with the original data. The Editors also expect each author to have read the complete manuscript and to take responsibility for the content and completeness of the manuscript and to understand that if the paper, or part of the paper, is found to be faulty or fraudulent, that he/she shares responsibility with his/her coauthors. The Mandatory Submission Form, which is published in the journals, should be signed by each author. In cases in which obtaining a signature from each author would delay publication, the corresponding author's signature is sufficient provided that the corresponding author understands that he or she signs on behalf of the other authors who have not signed the form. An author's name can be removed only at his/her request, but all coauthors must sign a change of authorship agreement for any change in authorship (additions, removals, or change of order) to be made.

Author Conflict of Interest

Authors of research and other articles are required at the time of submission to disclose to the APS Publications Office any potential conflict of interest (e.g., consultancies, stock ownership, equity interests, patent-licensing arrangements) and that they accept full responsibility for the conduct of the study, had full access to all the data, and controlled the decision to publish. Failure to do so may jeopardize eventual publication. If disclosures are to be made, the author(s) will be asked to fill out a Conflict of Interest Disclosure form. The information provided in the form, unless already disclosed in the submitted article, will be held in confidence while the paper is under review. If the article is accepted for publication, information on the potential conflict of interest—including a lack of control of the decision to publish—will be included in the Disclosures section, following the Acknowledgments section.

Editor and Reviewer Conflict of Interest

Editors and Reviewers should avoid making decisions on papers for which they may have a personal or financial conflict of interest. Reviewers who are collaborating with the author, or who are working on very similar research, should recuse themselves from reviewing a paper for which they have a conflict. An Editor in Chief should have a Consulting Editor or Associate Editor make a decision on a paper for which he or she has a conflict. When an Editor in Chief submits a paper to his or her journal, the paper is automatically assigned to a Guest Editor, a Consulting Editor, or an Associate Editor, who will handle all aspects of the peer review of the paper. The reviews are handled outside the web-based peer review system, so that the Editor in Chief will not have access to them.

Duplicate Publication, Plagiarism, Falsification

The journals of the APS accept only papers that are original work, no part of which has been submitted for publication elsewhere except as brief abstracts. When submitting a paper, the corresponding author should include copies of related manuscripts submitted or in press elsewhere. Taking material from another's work and submitting it as one's own is considered plagiarism. Taking material (including tables, figures, and data; or extended text passages), from the author's own prior publications is considered redundant publication or self-plagiarism, and is not permitted. Fabricating a report of research or suppressing or altering data to agree with one's conclusions is considered fraud. This includes altering figures in such a way as to obscure, move, remove, or introduce information or features.

Prior Publication

Material published by the author before submission in the following categories is considered prior publication: 1) articles

published in any publication, even online-only, non-peer reviewed publications, such as *Nature Precedings* or the physics arXiv; 2) articles, book chapters, and long abstracts containing original data in figures and tables, especially in proceedings publications; 3) widely circulated, copyrighted, or archival reports, such as the technical reports of IBM, the preliminary reports of MIT, the institute reports of the US Army, or the internal reports of NASA.

Doctoral dissertations that are made available by UMI/Proquest or institutional repositories are not considered prior publication. Data portions of submitted papers that have appeared on a web site will be permitted, with the proviso that the author inform the Editor at the time of the submission that such material exists so that the Editor can determine the suitability of such material for publication. Failure to do so will result in an automatic rejection of the manuscript. Examples of such work include, but are not limited to, immunofluorescence micrographs and/or animated gif/video files posted on a web site, or NIH-mandated posting of DNA microarray data. After the article is published in a journal of the American Physiological Society, the data should be removed from the author's web site.

Authors with concerns about possible prior publication that does not fall clearly into one of these categories should contact the Director of Publications and forward the material for examination.

Experiments Involving Animals or Humans

Authors using humans, animals, or fetal tissue in their experiments should refer to APS's policies on those subjects. Links to these policies can be found at <http://www.the-aps.org/publications/i4a/policies.htm>.

Ethical Procedure

APS reviewers have a responsibility to report suspected duplicate publication, fraud, plagiarism, or concerns about animal or human experimentation to the Editor. A reviewer may recognize and report that he/she is refereeing, or has recently refereed, a similar or identical paper for another journal by the same author(s). Readers may report that they have seen the same article elsewhere, or authors may see their own published work being plagiarized. In all cases the first action of the journal Editor is to inform the Publications Committee Chair through the Director of Publications by supplying copies of 1) the relevant material and 2) a draft letter to the corresponding author asking for an explanation in a nonjudgmental manner. The Publications Committee Chair must approve any correspondence with the author before it is sent to the author. If the author's explanation is unacceptable and it seems that serious unethical conduct has taken place, the matter is referred to the Publications Committee. After deliberation, a decision is made whether the case is serious enough to warrant a ban on future submissions and/or if the offending author's institution should be informed. The decision has to be approved by the Executive Cabinet of the APS Council, and the author has the right to appeal a sanction, with the opportunity to present his/her position, to the Publications Committee and the full APS Council.

If the infraction is less severe, the Editor, upon the advice of the Publications Chair, sends the author a letter of reprimand and reminds the author of APS publication policies; if the manuscript has been published, the Editor may require the author to publish an apology in the journal to correct the record. If, through the author's actions, APS has violated the copyright of another journal, the Publications Chair writes a letter of apology to the other journal.

In serious cases of fraud that result in retraction of the article, a retraction notice will be published in the journal and will be linked to the article in the online version. The online version will also be marked "retracted" with the retraction date.

Updated April 2008.