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Scientific Misconduct

Annette Flanagin

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We should ignore whining about the supposedly awful pressures of “publish or perish” when we have little credible evidence on what motivates misconduct, nor on what motivates the conduct of honest, equally stressed colleagues. Laziness, desire for fame, greed, and an inability to distinguish right from wrong are just as likely to be at the root of the problem. Drummond Rennie In scientific publication, the phrase scientific misconduct (specifically termed research misconduct by US government regulations and commonly known as fraud) has both ethical and legal connotations for authors and editors. A few studies (with limited methodologies) have estimated the prevalence

Misrepresentation: Fabrication, Falsification, and Omission

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Fabrication, falsification, and omission are forms of misrepresentation in scientific publication. Fabrication includes stating or presenting a falsehood and making up data, results, or “facts” that do not exist. Falsification includes manipulation of materials or processes, changing data or results, or altering the graphic display of data or digital images in a manner that results in misrepresentation (see also , Inappropriate Manipulation of Digital Images). Omission is the act of deliberately not reporting certain information for a desired outcome. Data fabrication, falsification, and omission occur when an investigator or author creates, alters, manipulates, selects, or presents selected or fails to

Misappropriation: Plagiarism and Breaches of Confidentiality

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Misappropriation in scientific publication includes plagiarism and breaches of confidentiality during the privileged review of a manuscript. (See also , Confidentiality, Confidentiality During Editorial Evaluation and Peer Review and After Publication.) In plagiarism, an author documents or reports ideas, words, data, or graphics, whether published or unpublished, of another as his or her own and without giving appropriate credit. Plagiarism of published work violates standards of honesty and collegial trust and may also violate copyright law (if the violation is shown to be legally actionable) (see , Intellectual Property: Ownership, Access, Rights, and Management, Copying, Reproducing, Adapting, and Other Uses

Inappropriate Manipulation of Digital Images

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Image processing software, such as Adobe Photoshop, has made it relatively easy for authors to manipulate images to highlight a specific outcome or feature by cropping or by adjusting color, brightness, or contrast. These same applications can be used by journal staff to screen digital images for evidence of inappropriate manipulation and fraudulent manipulation., Some enhancements to figures, such as cropping or adjusting color of the entire image, may be appropriate if such manipulations do not alter the interpretation of the original data or omit or obscure important data. However, any manipulation that results in a change in how the

Editorial Policy and Procedures for Detecting and Handling Allegations of Scientific Misconduct

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Detection of scientific misconduct in publishing is often the result of the alertness of coworkers and/or other authors of the same manuscript, and much less commonly by editors, peer reviewers, or readers. If an allegation of scientific misconduct is made in relation to a manuscript under consideration or published, the editor has a duty to ensure confidential and timely pursuit of that allegation. According to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), “If substantial doubts arise about the honesty and integrity of work, either submitted or published, it is the editor’s responsibility to ensure that the question is appropriately

Retractions, Expressions of Concern

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UPDATE: We will discontinue using quotation marks to identify parts of an article, but retain the capitalization; eg, This is discussed in the Methods section (not the “Methods” section). This change was made February 14, 2013. After receiving confirmation from the author or authors and/or a report from the author’s institution or other agency indicating that fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism has occurred, the journal should promptly publish a retraction. Preferably this retraction will be a signed letter from the corresponding author and all coauthors. If none of the authors will agree to publish a signed retraction, the editor may request

Allegations Involving Unresolved Questions of Scientific Misconduct

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Allegations Involving Manuscripts Under Editorial Consideration

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