GACOPA
MEDICAL JOURNAL

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS

MANUAL
2025

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

Introduction

The GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med. J) is committed to upholding the highest standards of publication ethics reflective of the same standard in medical practice.

The Council of Publication Ethics is responsible for outlining the ethical principles and guidelines for authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers involved in the publication process.

Principles of Publication Ethics

1. **Honesty and Transparency**: Authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers must maintain honesty and transparency throughout the publication process.
2. **Accountability:** All parties involved in the publication process are accountable for their actions.
3. **Fairness and Impartiality:** Decisions regarding manuscript acceptance, rejection, or revision must be based on merit and not influenced by personal biases or conflicts of interest.
4. **Respect for Intellectual Property:** Authors, editors, reviewers, and publishers must respect the intellectual property rights of others.
5. **Confidentiality:** Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the publication process, particularly regarding manuscript submissions and peer review.

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

Guidelines for Authors

1. General Information

GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med J) publishes high-quality, peer-reviewed original research, reviews, case reports, and clinical studies in all fields of medicine and healthcare. We aim to provide a platform for advancing medical knowledge, promoting evidence-based practices, and contributing to global healthcare improvements.

Please read these guidelines carefully before submitting your manuscript to ensure that your submission meets our requirements. Manuscripts that do not adhere to these guidelines may be returned for revision before being considered for peer review.

Who is an author?

Any person who creates a written work, such as a book, article, research paper, or other literary composition. Authors are responsible for researching, writing, and editing their work, and mostly receive credit for their creation and they own the intellectual property.

Applicable categories

Researcher: Conducts research and writes papers, articles, or books on their findings.

Health Journalist and Commentator: Writes news articles, features, or editorials relevant to the subject areas in health and healthcare for publications.

Academic Researcher: Writes scholarly articles, research papers, or books on a specific or specialized subject in applicable scope of publications.

Health bloggers: Creates content for websites, blogs, or social media platforms specific in health and healthcare.

Clinical writers: write scholarly articles on rare or trending case studies, clinical findings, therapeutic discovery and novel interventions in clinical practice

Criteria for authorship

1. **Education and Expertise**: Must be well educated and have expertise in the relevant subject and contribute in conceptualization of the topic and research design

2. **Research and Analytical Skills**: May have contributed to the conduct of the research, evaluate resources, identify credible data, and analyze complex information.

3. **Accountability and responsibility**: Must be accountable and responsible for published content

Qualities of an author

1. *Adaptability and Flexibility*: Ability to adapt to changing writing trends and styles. Willingness to revise and edit work based on feedback

2. *Continuous Learning and Professional Development*: Commitment to ongoing learning and professional development. Staying up-to-date with industry trends and best practices

3. *Creativity and Originality*: Ability to think creatively and develop original ideas

4. *Communication and Interpersonal Skills*: Ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and concisely

5. Discipline and Time Management: Ability to meet deadlines and manage time effectively

6. Passion and Motivation: Passion for writing, and motivation to continually improve and develop writing skills

Roles and Responsibilities

- Research: Conducts research to gather information and data for writing.
- Writing: Creates original content which includes text, images, figures, and graphics.

- Editing: Reviews and revises research work to ensure accuracy, clarity, and quality.

Proofreading: Checks research work for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Communication: Collaborates with editors, publishers, or other stakeholders to discuss research work

General author responsibilities

1. Originality and Plagiarism: Authors must ensure that their work is original and does not plagiarize others.
2. Authorship: Authors must accurately reflect their contributions to the work.
3. Conflicts of Interest: Authors must disclose any conflicts of interest that could influence their work.
4. Data Accuracy: Authors must ensure the accuracy and integrity of their data.
5. Citation and Reference: Authors must properly cite and reference the work of others.

Benefits of Being an Author

1. *Establishes expertise*: Demonstrates knowledge and authority in a particular field or subject.
2. *Builds credibility*: Enhances reputation and trustworthiness with readers and peers.

3. *Increases visibility*: Raises profile and presence in the literary or academic community.
4. *Income*: Earns royalties, fees, or other forms of compensation for their work.
5. *Legacy*: Creates a lasting impact and contribution to literature, research, or society.

Corresponding Authors

1. Responsible primarily for communication with the journal during the manuscript submission, peer-review, and publication process.
2. Ensures that all the journal's administrative requirements, such as providing details of authorship, ethics committee approval, clinical trial registration documentation, and disclosures of relationships and activities, are properly completed and reported.
3. Should be available throughout the submission and peer-review process to respond to editorial queries in a timely way, and should be available after publication to respond to critiques of the work and cooperate with any requests from the journal for data or additional information should questions about the paper arise after publication.

Co-authors

1. Co-authors have specific responsibilities assigned by the corresponding author or as may be discussed by the authors
2. They must satisfy the 3 criteria for authorship

Authorship Inclusion

1. Collaboration and co-authorship with colleagues in the locations where the research is conducted.
2. Authors should meet all three criteria for authorship

Authorship Exclusion

To remove or add an author after manuscript submission or publication, a written explanation and signed statement of agreement for the requested change from all listed authors and from the author to be removed or added must be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief

Non-Author Contributors

1. Do not meet the criteria for authorship
2. Contributors should be acknowledged
3. written permission must be sought

Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Exclusion as author

1. Use of AI in the production of submitted work must be disclosed
2. A cover letter should be addressed to the editor-in-chief
3. AI and AI-assisted technologies should not be listed as author or co-author, or be cited as such

Types of Manuscripts Accepted

Original Research Article: Full-length research articles that present original data, methodology, and analysis that contribute to well-established knowledge in a particular field.

Scope

1. Medicine and medical sciences in all specialties
2. Biomedical sciences
3. Para-medical sciences
4. Basic sciences

Length: 6000 words including figures, tables, references

Special Review Articles: Comprehensive reviews of a specific topic or research area, synthesizing existing evidence. Special articles includes systematic review, meta-analysis, scoping review, integrative review and rapid review of special medical events, clinical notes and

clinical investigation. Review articles should cite original works that lead to formulation of a concept, theory or hypothesis.

Scope

1. Medicine and medical sciences in all specialties
2. Biomedical sciences
3. Para-medical sciences
4. Basic sciences

Length: 7000 words including figures, tables, references

Brief Reports (Letters to the Editor):

Short commentary on articles previously published in the journal or on important medical issues. This report reviews original article

Scope

1. Medicine and medical sciences in all specialties
2. Biomedical sciences
3. Para-medical sciences
4. Basic sciences

Length: 1500 words including figures, tables, references

Case Report

Extremely rare cases and conditions including novel outbreaks. A collection of cases highlighting particular trends or problems in clinical practice.

Scope

1. Medicine and medical sciences in all specialties
2. Biomedical sciences
3. Para-medical sciences
4. Basic sciences

Length: 2500 words including figures, tables, references

Editorials (Commentary): Invited opinions, reflections, or perspectives from experts on current medical topics.

Main types

1. Invited responses to plenary papers published in the journal
2. Volunteered commentaries on articles published in the journal: The author of the critiqued article will have the opportunity to respond to the commentary; the commentary and the

author's response will appear together in the journal

3. Perspectives in a particular field and on particular subject matter of substantial evidence are welcome
4. Medicine and medical sciences in all specialties
5. Biomedical sciences
6. Para-medical sciences
7. Basic sciences
8. healthcare leadership
9. clinical officers and physician associates professions

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3. Submission Process

- **Online Submission**: Manuscripts must be submitted through the *GACOPA Med J* online submission portal. Refer to the appropriate page link **SUBMIT YOUR ARTICLE**. Submissions by email are not accepted.
- **Include a cover letter with your manuscript that states the title, the authors' names and affiliations, and a brief summary of the manuscript.**

- **Registration**: Authors must create an account on the journal's submission system. You will be required to complete submission forms and upload necessary documents.
- **Manuscript Preparation**: Ensure that the manuscript follows all formatting and style requirements as outlined in these guidelines.

Check List

1. Cover letter
2. Manuscript
3. Tables, figures, and images
4. Patient consent forms
5. IRB approval documents
6. Conflict of interest disclosure

Conflict of interest form *complete the GACOPA COI Form by using the appropriate downloadable link*

Manuscript Preparation

All manuscripts should be written in **clear, concise English**. Non-native English-speaking authors are

encouraged to have their manuscripts professionally edited to ensure clarity.

General formatting

- **Font**: Use Times New Roman, 12 pt.
- **Margins**: 1-inch (2.5 cm) margins on all sides.
- **Line Spacing**: Double-spaced throughout the manuscript, including the references.
- **Page Numbering**: Pages should be numbered consecutively in the top right corner.
- **Sections**: Manuscripts should be divided into the following sections (for research articles):
- Title Page
- Abstract
- Keywords
- Main Text (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion)
- References
- Tables/Figures (each on a separate page)

Title Page

The title page should contain the following information:

- **Title**: A concise title (maximum of 15 words) that clearly reflects the content and focus of the manuscript.
- **Author(s)**: Full names of all authors. Include the full affiliation (institution, department, city, country) for each author.
- **Corresponding Author**: The name, email address, and postal address of the corresponding author.
- **Acknowledgments**: Any acknowledgments of funding, contributions, or support from individuals or organizations.
- **Conflict of Interest**: Declaration of any potential conflicts of interest for all authors.

4.3. Abstract

- The abstract should be a maximum of **250 words**.
- It should be structured into **Background**, **Methods**, **Results**, and **Conclusion** sections (for research articles).

- **Keywords**: After the abstract, provide 4-6 relevant keywords to assist in indexing.

4.4. Main Text

- **Introduction**: A brief introduction explaining the context and rationale for the study, the research question, and the objectives of the study.
- **Methods**: A detailed description of the research design, population/sample, data collection procedures, analysis methods, and any ethical considerations.
- **Results**: A summary of the findings, presented in a clear and objective manner. Avoid excessive interpretation of the results here.
- **Discussion**: A thorough discussion of the results, their significance, comparison with existing literature, implications for practice, and limitations of the study.
- **Conclusion**: A brief conclusion summarizing the main findings and their potential impact on the field.
- **References**: All references cited in the manuscript should be listed in the correct format (see Reference Formatting Guidelines).

4.5. Tables and Figures

- **Tables**: Tables should be numbered consecutively (e.g., Table 1, Table 2) and should have a descriptive title. Tables should be clear, concise, and formatted according to journal guidelines.
- **Figures**: Figures should also be numbered consecutively (e.g., Figure 1, Figure 2). Each figure must be accompanied by a legend that explains its content.
- **Resolution**: Images and figures should have a minimum resolution of 300 dpi.
- **File Format**: Tables should be submitted as editable text files, and figures should be submitted as high-quality images (JPEG, TIFF, or PNG).

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5. Ethical Considerations

All manuscripts submitted to *GACOPA Med J* must comply with ethical guidelines.

- **Human and Animal Research**: If the study involves human participants or animals, a statement confirming that the research was conducted in accordance with the relevant ethical standards (e.g., Declaration of Helsinki) must be included. Ethics approval should be obtained from a recognized ethics committee or institutional review board (IRB).

- **Informed Consent**: Authors must ensure that informed consent was obtained from all human participants included in the study. A statement of this consent must be included in the manuscript.
- **Plagiarism**: Manuscripts will be checked for plagiarism using appropriate software. Authors are responsible for ensuring that their work is original and properly cited.
- **Conflict of Interest**: Authors must declare any potential conflicts of interest related to the manuscript. This includes financial, professional, or personal relationships that could influence the research.

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6. References

- References should be formatted in accordance with the *GACOPA Med J* citation style (see GACOPA Citation style and Reference Formatting Guidelines GRF).
- Only references cited in the manuscript should be listed. Avoid citing articles that have not been published.

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7. Review and Publication Process

1. **Initial Screening**: The editorial office will perform an initial review to ensure that the manuscript fits the scope of the journal and adheres to submission guidelines.
2. **Peer Review**: Manuscripts that pass the initial screening will be sent for peer review. The review process is typically double-blind, where both authors and reviewers are anonymized.
3. **Revisions**: Authors may be required to make revisions based on reviewer feedback. Revisions should be submitted within the timeline specified by the editor.
4. **Acceptance**: Upon successful completion of the peer review and revision process, the manuscript will be accepted for publication.
5. **Proofreading**: Authors will receive a proof of the article before publication. This is the final opportunity to correct any errors.

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8. Publication Ethics

- **Originality**: The submitted manuscript should be original, and authors should ensure that no part of the manuscript has been previously published or is under consideration for publication elsewhere.

- **Authorship**: All individuals who have made substantial contributions to the research should be listed as authors. All authors must approve the manuscript before submission.

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9. Open Access and Copyright

- *GACOPA Med J is a hybrid Publisher and* follows **subscription-based** and an **Open Access** publication model. This means that all articles under the open access option are freely available to readers worldwide.
- Authors retain copyright of their published articles, but they grant *GACOPA Med J* a license to publish, distribute, and display the article online.

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10. Contact Information

For any inquiries related to the submission process, please contact the editorial office of *GACOPA Med J*:

- **Email**: www.journals@gacopaworld.org
- **Website**: http://www.gmj.gacopaworl.org

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

This set of **Author Guidelines** provides clear instructions for authors submitting their manuscripts to *GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med J)*, helping them prepare their articles according to the journal's expectations. By adhering to these guidelines, authors will ensure their submissions are processed efficiently and meet the high standards of the journal.

Additional Resources

For further on authors' guidelines, click the link below.

Refer to GACOPA CPE Guidelines

Disclosure of Financial and Non-Financial Relationships and Activities, and Conflicts of Interest

An author shall make complete disclosure pertaining to the readers perceptions of conflict of interest and actual conflicts of interest from all relations, financial relationships including support funding and sponsored agreements. Refer to GACOPA CPE Guidelines

Complete the GACOPA Disclosure of Interest Form

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

For the GACOPA Referencing Format (GRF) and citation style, click on the link below

Read more on GRF formatted referencing

Guidelines for Editors

Introduction

As an editor of *GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med J)*, your primary responsibility is to ensure that the journal publishes high-quality, scientifically rigorous, and

ethically sound research. The editorial process should be fair, transparent, and free from bias. Editors must uphold the journal's standards while making decisions based on scientific merit and ethical considerations.

This document outlines the key responsibilities and guidelines for editors to follow in their editorial duties.

General Responsibilities of Editors

1. **Editorial Decision-Making**:
    - Editors are responsible for making final decisions on the acceptance, rejection, or revision of manuscripts. Decisions should be based on the scientific quality, relevance, and originality of the manuscript, as well as its alignment with the journal's scope.
    - Editors should consider the recommendations from peer reviewers but make independent decisions based on their own expertise and the merit of the submission.
2. **Ensuring High-Quality Manuscripts**:
    - Editors are responsible for maintaining the academic and scientific integrity of the

journal by ensuring that only high-quality research is published.

- This includes assessing the novelty of the research, the rigor of the methodology, the clarity of the presentation, and the potential impact of the findings.

3. **Fairness and Impartiality**:
    - All manuscripts must be evaluated based on their scientific merit without regard to the author's gender, nationality, institutional affiliation, or personal beliefs.
    - Decisions should be made free from personal bias or conflicts of interest.
4. **Transparency**:
    - Editors should clearly communicate with authors about manuscript decisions, revisions, and any necessary clarifications.
    - Editors should provide authors with feedback from reviewers that is clear, constructive, and useful in improving the manuscript.
5. **Ethical Conduct**:
    - Editors must ensure that published research adheres to ethical guidelines, such

as obtaining appropriate consent for clinical studies, maintaining patient confidentiality, and adhering to research ethics.

- Editors must take appropriate action in the event of any ethical misconduct, including plagiarism, data fabrication, or duplicate publication.

Responsibilities in the Editorial Process

1. **Initial Manuscript Evaluation**:
    - Editors should conduct an initial assessment of every submitted manuscript to determine its relevance to the journal's scope and quality.
    - Manuscripts that do not meet basic editorial standards, such as failing to follow submission guidelines or lacking scientific rigor, should be rejected at this stage.
2. **Assigning Reviewers**:
    - Editors are responsible for selecting and inviting qualified peer reviewers with appropriate expertise for each manuscript.

- They should ensure that reviewers have no conflicts of interest with the authors or the subject of the manuscript.
- If a reviewer's report is not returned on time, editors should follow up with the reviewer or consider alternative reviewers.

3. **Handling Conflicts of Interest**:
   - Editors should declare any conflicts of interest that may arise during the editorial process, whether personal, financial, or professional.
   - If an editor has a conflict of interest with a manuscript, the editorial responsibility should be delegated to another editor.
4. **Managing Peer Review**:
   - Editors should ensure that the peer review process is fair, unbiased, and thorough. They must guarantee that all reviews are conducted in a double-blind manner (unless otherwise specified).
   - Editors should also ensure that the reviews provided are detailed, constructive, and provide authors with useful guidance for improving their manuscript.

5. **Editorial Revisions**:
    - When a manuscript requires revisions, editors should clearly communicate the necessary changes to authors. This could involve addressing reviewer comments, improving clarity, correcting errors, or providing additional data.
    - Editors should ensure that the revised manuscript meets the journal's standards before making a final decision.
6. **Final Decision**:
    - After considering reviewer feedback and revisions, editors should make a final decision (accept, minor revisions, major revisions, or reject) on the manuscript.
    - Editors should justify their decisions in writing and communicate their reasons to the authors in a transparent and professional manner.

Ethical Guidelines for Editors

1. **Confidentiality**:
    - Editors must treat all submitted manuscripts and associated materials as

confidential. Manuscripts should not be shared with anyone other than the authors, reviewers, and members of the editorial team.

- Manuscripts under review should not be discussed or used for personal advantage.

2. **Handling Ethical Violations**:
    - Editors must address any allegations of unethical research practices, including plagiarism, data fabrication, or failure to adhere to ethical guidelines. Appropriate actions should be taken, which may include contacting the authors, retracting articles, or informing relevant institutions.
    - In cases of suspected ethical misconduct, editors should follow the guidelines set by reputable bodies, such as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).
3. **Author and Reviewer Feedback**:
    - Editors should maintain respectful, professional, and constructive communication with both authors and reviewers. Any personal attacks, discriminatory remarks, or unprofessional language are unacceptable.

- Feedback to authors should be clear and actionable, helping authors improve their manuscripts for future publication.

4. **Conflict Resolution**:
    - If disputes arise between authors and reviewers or among the editorial team, editors should address the issues with impartiality and transparency. If necessary, external advice from an editorial board member or expert may be sought.

Additional Responsibilities

1. **Maintaining Editorial Integrity**:
    - Editors should regularly update themselves on new trends and ethical standards in medical publishing. Continuing professional development in editorial practices is encouraged.
    - Editors should stay informed about any legal, regulatory, or technological changes affecting academic publishing.
2. **Promotion and Outreach**:

- Editors should work collaboratively with the editorial board to promote the journal, attract high-quality submissions, and expand the journal's impact and visibility within the medical research community.

3. **Ensuring Long-Term Access and Preservation**:
    - Editors must ensure that the journal's content is archived in trusted digital repositories and is accessible in the long term. This includes ensuring compliance with the journal's open access policies and any necessary preservation strategies.
4. **Maintaining Diversity and Inclusivity**:
    - Editors should actively strive to maintain diversity and inclusivity in the journal's content, editorial board, and review process. This includes encouraging submissions from diverse authors, regions, and research topics, particularly those that address underserved or underrepresented communities.

As an editor for *GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med J)*, your role is crucial in maintaining the scientific quality and ethical standards of the journal. By following

these guidelines, editors help ensure that only the best research reaches the medical community, thereby advancing the field of healthcare and promoting public health.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your editorial responsibilities, please contact the editorial office of *GACOPA Med J* @ *editor-in-chief@gacopaworld.org*

This set of editor guidelines ensures that editorial staff at *GACOPA Med J* work within a framework of fairness, transparency, and ethical integrity, which are essential for maintaining the journal's reputation and high academic standards. Creating a customized policy guideline on editorial freedom for the *GACOPA Medical Journal* requires a balanced approach that encourages academic integrity, independence, and transparency while ensuring that the journal maintains its credibility and ethical standards. Below is a proposed framework for such a policy guideline:

Editorial Freedom Policy

Introduction

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

The *GACOPA Medical Journal* (hereafter referred to as the Journal) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of editorial independence and integrity in the publication of medical research. Editorial freedom is vital for ensuring that the editorial process is free from undue influence, including from external sources, funding bodies, and commercial interests. The policies outlined below ensure that the Journal adheres to these principles and fosters a trusted and impartial platform for medical discourse.

1. Editorial Independence

- **Editorial Authority**: The editorial team, including the Editor-in-Chief, Associate Editors, and Reviewers, will have full authority over the content of the Journal, with decisions based on scientific merit, quality, relevance, and adherence to ethical standards.
- **Influence Prevention**: The editorial process will be free from any interference by the publisher, sponsors, advertisers, or any other external entities. Manuscript selection, peer review, and editorial decisions will be made independently of any commercial or political pressures.
- **Confidentiality**: Editorial decisions, including manuscript acceptance or rejection, will be made confidentially and solely based on the quality of

the submission, with no influence from outside parties.

2. Conflict of Interest

- **Disclosure**: All authors, reviewers, and editors must disclose any potential conflicts of interest that might affect their objectivity. This includes financial support, personal relationships, or professional ties that could be seen as influencing the research or editorial process.
- **Review Process**: Reviewers and editors will recuse themselves from the decision-making process in cases where conflicts of interest are identified.

3. Peer Review Process

- **Transparency**: The peer review process will be transparent, fair, and based on the expertise of the reviewers. Manuscripts will be reviewed based on scientific rigor, novelty, and contribution to the field of medicine.
- **Editorial Oversight**: The editorial board will ensure that the peer review process is free from bias and that reviewer feedback is constructive and based on scientific evidence.

4. Ethical Standards

- **Integrity**: All published content will adhere to ethical guidelines for research publication, including standards of scientific accuracy, proper citation of sources, and clear documentation of research methods.
- **Plagiarism and Fraud**: The Journal maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism, data manipulation, and other forms of research misconduct. Articles found to violate ethical standards will be subject to retraction or correction.

5. Accountability and Transparency

- **Clear Communication**: The editorial team will provide clear and transparent communication regarding decisions made during the editorial process, including rejections, revisions, and acceptances.
- **Responsiveness**: The editorial team is committed to addressing any complaints or concerns raised by authors, reviewers, or readers in a timely and transparent manner.

6. Relationship with Sponsors and Advertisers

- **Separation of Editorial and Commercial Interests**: The Journal will maintain a clear separation between editorial decisions and any

commercial or advertising activities. Advertisers and sponsors will not have influence over editorial content.

- **Advertising Policies**: Advertisements and commercial content will be clearly marked, and no advertisements will be accepted that conflict with the ethical standards or content of the Journal.

7. Academic Freedom

- **Encouraging Diverse Perspectives**: The Journal supports the free exchange of ideas and academic freedom, welcoming a diversity of perspectives on medical research, methodologies, and findings, including those that may challenge prevailing theories.
- **Non-Discrimination**: The editorial process will be free from discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, or any other factors unrelated to the scientific content of submissions.

8. Editorial Review and Updates

- **Regular Review**: The Editorial Freedom Policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it continues to meet evolving standards of academic publishing and addresses emerging challenges within the field.

- **Commitment to Best Practices**: The *GACOPA Medical Journal* will continually evaluate best practices in the medical publishing field and adjust editorial guidelines as necessary to maintain the highest standards of editorial freedom.

The *GACOPA Medical Journal* strives to ensure that editorial freedom remains a cornerstone of its publishing ethos. This policy provides a framework for upholding editorial integrity and independence while fostering an environment where research and scholarly discourse can thrive without outside interference. Through these guidelines, the Journal commits to transparency, ethical publishing practices, and the advancement of knowledge in the medical community.

Peer Review Guidelines

Introduction

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

The peer review process is a cornerstone of academic publishing, ensuring the integrity, quality, and credibility of the content published in *GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med J)*. As a peer reviewer, your role is to provide expert, unbiased feedback on submitted manuscripts, helping authors improve the quality of their work and guiding editors in making decisions about publication.

These guidelines are designed to ensure that the peer review process is transparent, fair, and of the highest standard.

Eligibility Criteria for Reviewers

- **Expertise**: Reviewers should have substantial expertise in the subject matter of the manuscript. They should have a relevant background in medical research, clinical practice, or public health, and a strong understanding of the research methodologies used.
- **Experience**: Reviewers should have a proven track record of peer review or publication in the field, though we welcome early-career researchers as potential reviewers under the guidance of senior colleagues.
- **Impartiality**: Reviewers should have no conflicts of interest with the authors or the research presented in the manuscript.

Reviewer Responsibilities

1. **Confidentiality**: Reviewers must treat the manuscript as confidential. The content should not be shared with others or used for personal advantage. Disclosing any part of the manuscript without prior permission from the journal is strictly prohibited.

2. **Objective Evaluation**: Reviews must be unbiased and based solely on the scientific merit of the work. Reviewers should focus on the research design, methodology, and validity of results, data interpretation, relevance, and contribution to the field, not personal preferences or biases.

3. **Constructive Feedback**: Provide clear, constructive, and respectful feedback to the authors. Suggestions for improving the manuscript should be actionable, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses in a professional manner.

4. **Timeliness**: Reviewers are expected to complete the review within the specified time frame (usually 2–4 weeks). If additional time is required, reviewers should communicate with the editorial office in advance.

5. **Conflict of Interest**: Reviewers must disclose any conflicts of interest, including personal, financial,

or professional relationships that may affect their impartiality. If a reviewer believes they cannot evaluate a manuscript impartially due to a conflict of interest, they should decline the invitation to review.

6. **Ethical Standards**: Reviewers should be vigilant about identifying ethical issues in the research, such as plagiarism, data fabrication, or ethical violations in clinical trials. If any ethical concerns arise during the review process, they should be reported to the editorial team immediately.

Review Criteria

As a reviewer, your evaluation should cover, but is not limited to, the following areas:

1. **Originality and Relevance**:
    - Does the manuscript present novel findings that contribute to the field of medical science?
    - Are the research questions and objectives clearly defined, and do they address relevant issues in medicine or healthcare?
2. **Scientific Quality**:
    - Is the study design appropriate and robust for the research question?

- Are the methods described in sufficient detail to allow replication?
- Are the statistical analyses accurate and suitable for the data collected?
- Are the results appropriately interpreted, with a clear link to the research question?

3. **Clarity and Structure**:
   - Is the manuscript well-written and logically organized?
   - Are the abstract, introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections clearly structured?
   - Are the figures, tables, and references clearly presented and relevant?
4. **Data and Transparency**:
   - Is the data presented in a transparent and reproducible manner? Are data availability and ethical considerations discussed?
   - Does the manuscript follow established standards for transparency, such as those set by CONSORT, STROBE, or PRISMA for reporting clinical trials or observational studies?

5. **Ethical Considerations**:
    - If applicable, does the manuscript provide information on ethics approval, informed consent, and any other relevant ethical aspects (e.g., patient confidentiality, conflict of interest)?
    - Are there any concerns about plagiarism, duplicate publication, or other unethical research practices?
6. **Impact and Contribution**:
    - Does the paper have the potential to make a significant impact on the field?
    - How well does the study address the practical or clinical implications of its findings?

Decision-Making

Based on the review, you will be asked to provide one of the following recommendations:

1. **Accept**: The manuscript is suitable for publication with little or no revisions.
2. **Minor Revisions**: The manuscript requires some minor revisions to address specific concerns or improve clarity. The author should resubmit the revised version for further consideration.

3. **Major Revisions**: The manuscript requires significant changes before it can be considered for publication. The authors should be encouraged to address the major issues raised in the review.
4. **Reject**: The manuscript does not meet the journal's standards or is not suitable for publication based on its scientific quality or relevance to the journal's scope.

Peer Reviewer Recognition

- **Acknowledgment**: All reviewers will be acknowledged for their contribution to the peer review process in the journal's annual report and on the website.
- **Reviewer Credit**: *GACOPA Med J* encourages reviewers to include their contributions in their professional portfolios or CVs as a form of academic recognition.
- **Reviewer Certificates**: Upon request, peer reviewers will be issued a certificate of review participation for their records.

Ethical Use of Peer Review

- *GACOPA Med J* holds that the peer review process should be used to improve scientific

quality, not to promote personal agendas, and that it must never be manipulated for any inappropriate purpose.

Peer review plays a critical role in maintaining the quality and credibility of research published in *GACOPA Medical Journal (GACOPA Med J)*. By adhering to these guidelines, reviewers help ensure that only scientifically rigorous, ethical, and impactful research is shared with the medical community.

If you have any questions or concerns about the review process or guidelines, please contact the editorial office of *GACOPA Med J* @ editor@gacopaworld.org; journal@gacopaworld.org

Corrections and Retractions

Introduction

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

The *GACOPA Medical Journal* is committed to ensuring the accuracy, integrity, and transparency of the research it publishes. It is vital that any errors, inaccuracies, or issues with published articles be addressed promptly and responsibly.

This policy outlines the guidelines for correcting or retracting articles to uphold the credibility of the Journal and maintain trust within the academic community.

1. Correction Policy

Corrections may be issued when errors are identified in a published article, provided those errors do not significantly alter the overall conclusions or findings of the research. Common reasons for corrections include typographical errors, minor miscalculations, citation mistakes, or factual inaccuracies that do not affect the article's conclusions.

Scope of Corrections:

- Typographical or grammatical errors
- Errors in the data, calculations, or statistical analyses that do not affect the overall conclusions
- Minor inaccuracies in authorship, affiliations, or reference citations
- Incomplete or incorrect information in figures, tables, or captions

Requesting a Correction

- Authors who identify errors in their published article should notify the editorial team as soon as possible.

- If a reader identifies a potential error, they should contact the editorial office, where it will be reviewed for accuracy.

Process for Correction:

- Upon receiving a correction request, the editorial team will assess the nature and severity of the error.
- If the correction is deemed minor and does not affect the conclusions or scientific validity of the article, the editorial team will publish a correction notice along with the updated content.
- The correction notice will clearly identify the changes made and include the original article's title, DOI, and a reference to the correction.
- Corrections will be linked to the original article and published in the same issue or an appropriate future issue.

Visibility of Corrections:

- Corrections will be easily visible to readers by linking to the original article with an annotation or note indicating the change.
- If the correction is substantial, the corrected version of the article will be republished, along with the correction statement.

2. Retraction Policy

Retractions are required when an article is found to be seriously flawed, including instances of misconduct, falsification of data, plagiarism, or if the conclusions are invalid due to significant errors. Retractions will also occur when the article's conclusions are irreversibly undermined or when there are ethical concerns regarding the research.

Scope of Retractions:

- Serious scientific errors that undermine the conclusions of the study
- Research misconduct, such as data fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism
- Ethical violations (e.g., issues with research ethics or consent)
- Duplication of publication (e.g., duplicate submissions or duplicate publication without proper acknowledgment)

Requesting a Retraction:

- Retractions may be initiated by the authors, the editorial team, or the readers if serious issues are identified with the published article.
- If an author requests a retraction, they must provide a clear explanation for the retraction

request, including any supporting evidence for their decision.

- The editorial team will review the situation thoroughly, including contacting any relevant parties (e.g., co-authors, research institutions) to verify the issue.

Process for Retraction:

- Upon determination of the need for a retraction, the article's DOI will be updated to reflect the retracted status.
- A retraction notice will be published, including the title of the article, the reason for retraction, and the circumstances leading to the decision. This notice will be publicly available on the article's page and in the issue in which the article appeared.
- The retraction notice will clearly indicate that the article should not be cited, as its conclusions are no longer valid.
- A retraction will be accompanied by a statement explaining the error or misconduct, but sensitive details (e.g., names of individuals involved) may be omitted for privacy or legal reasons.

Visibility of Retractions:

- Retractions will be made easily visible to all readers by clearly marking the article as retracted, with a link to the retraction notice.
- The retraction will appear in the issue of the Journal in which the original article was published and on the article's webpage.

Partial Retraction

In some cases, a partial retraction may be necessary when specific sections of the article are found to be in error or when only certain conclusions or data points are affected. A partial retraction allows the rest of the article to remain valid.

Scope of Partial Retraction:

- When a specific part of the study, such as a set of data or an experiment, is found to be in error, but the overall conclusions of the study are still supported by the remaining valid data.

Process for Partial Retraction:

- A partial retraction notice will be published that specifies the section of the article being retracted and the impact of the retraction on the study's conclusions.
- The partial retraction will be linked to the original article, and both the retracted and remaining content will be clearly identified.

Editorial Responsibility and Accountability

- **Role of Editors**: The Editor-in-Chief and editorial board members will take full responsibility for ensuring that all corrections, retractions, and updates are handled transparently and in a timely manner. They will carefully review any retraction or correction request to ensure the integrity of the process.
- **Investigation Process**: In cases of suspected research misconduct, the editorial team may engage independent experts or review committees to investigate further. If necessary, the issue may be escalated to the author's institution or relevant authorities.

Ethical Considerations

- **Maintaining Trust**: The Journal will ensure that corrections and retractions are conducted in a way that maintains the trust of the academic community, readers, and authors. All actions related to corrections and retractions will be handled in a fair, transparent, and accountable manner.
- **Confidentiality**: During the correction or retraction process, confidentiality will be maintained to protect the privacy and reputation of all parties involved, unless disclosure is necessary for legal or ethical reasons.

Tracking and Documentation

- **Record Keeping**: The Journal will maintain a detailed record of all corrections, retractions, and updates, including the reasons for these actions and any correspondence related to the issue.
- **Public Access**: The Journal's website will feature a public list of retracted or corrected articles to provide transparency and ensure readers are aware of changes.

The *GACOPA Medical Journal* strives to uphold the highest standards of scientific integrity by ensuring that corrections and retractions are handled with care, transparency, and in adherence to ethical guidelines. This policy allows the Journal to maintain the trust of its authors, readers, and the broader scientific community while promoting a commitment to accuracy and ethical publication practices.

Data Protection and Data Sharing Policy

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

Introduction

The Journal is committed to maintaining the confidentiality, privacy, and security of personal and sensitive data throughout the publishing process.

This policy outlines the Journal's approach to data protection, data sharing, and the ethical management of data in compliance with relevant laws and best practices. The Journal aims to promote responsible data sharing to advance scientific research while safeguarding the privacy of individuals and research integrity.

1. Data Protection Principles

The Journal adheres to the following principles to ensure the proper handling of data:

- **Confidentiality**: All data, including personal and sensitive information, will be treated with strict confidentiality throughout the editorial, peer review, and publication process.
- **Integrity**: Data will be stored and processed in ways that ensure its accuracy and integrity, preventing unauthorized access, alteration, or loss.
- **Transparency**: The Journal will ensure that authors and other stakeholders are fully informed about data processing practices and the rights they hold over their data.

- **Legality**: The Journal will comply with applicable data protection laws, including Data Protection Act of 2012 (Act 843) of the Republic of Ghana and principles outlined in the General data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for EU citizens, United Nations Register of Damage, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act 1996 (HIPAA) for US citizens, and other relevant international regulations, ensuring all data handling is lawful.

2. Types of Data Collected

The Journal may collect and process various types of data during the manuscript submission and publication process:

- **Personal Data**: Includes names, affiliations, email addresses, and contact details of authors, co-authors, reviewers, and editors.
- **Submission Data**: Includes manuscript files, figures, tables, raw data sets, and supplementary materials submitted by authors.
- **Peer Review Data**: Includes confidential reviewer reports, reviewer identities (if disclosed), and any related correspondence.
- **Publication Data**: Includes article metadata (title, abstract, keywords, references), and any

associated data published alongside the article (e.g., datasets, supplementary files).

3. Data Security Measures

The Journal takes appropriate measures to protect the data it collects and processes:

- **Access Controls**: Only authorized individuals, such as editors, reviewers, and technical support staff, will have access to personal and sensitive data.
- **Encryption and Backup**: All digital data will be stored in encrypted formats, and regular backups will be maintained to prevent data loss.
- **Data Handling Protocols**: The Journal follows best practices for securely handling and disposing of personal data, including ensuring data is anonymized or pseudonymized when appropriate.

4. Data Sharing and Transparency

- **Open Data and Transparency**: The Journal encourages authors to share relevant research data to ensure transparency and reproducibility of results. Authors may submit datasets, methods, and other supplementary data for inclusion in their published articles.

- Authors are encouraged to deposit data in reputable public repositories and provide access links for transparency (e.g., GitHub, Dryad, or institutional repositories).
- Where appropriate, data sharing will be aligned with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data principles.

- **Author Responsibility**: Authors are responsible for ensuring that any data they submit complies with data protection laws and ethical guidelines, particularly in relation to privacy and consent.
  - Authors must obtain informed consent for the use of any personal data or identifiable information included in their research, especially in the case of clinical trials or medical research.
- **Data Sharing with Third Parties**: Data may be shared with third parties (e.g., data repositories, collaborating institutions) only with the consent of the authors and in compliance with data protection laws.
  - When sharing data, the Journal will ensure that personal data is anonymized or pseudonymized as appropriate.

- Any agreements regarding third-party access to data (e.g., collaborative research projects, data sharing agreements) will be clearly defined and include safeguards to protect data security and privacy.

5. Author and Contributor Rights

- **Rights to Personal Data**: Authors, reviewers, and editors have the right to access, correct, and request the deletion of their personal data held by the Journal. These requests can be made directly to the editorial team.
- **Informed Consent**: Authors must confirm that they have obtained informed consent from any participants involved in clinical or medical studies, particularly regarding the collection and use of personal data. Authors must also ensure compliance with relevant ethics approval processes from their institutions.
- **Withdrawal of Data**: Authors may request the withdrawal of their data from publication if necessary, though this may be subject to specific conditions (e.g., retraction due to errors or misconduct). The Journal will follow appropriate protocols for handling such requests.

6. Peer Review and Data Confidentiality

- **Confidentiality of Peer Review**: All data related to the peer review process, including reviewer identities, comments, and correspondence, will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone outside the editorial team without proper authorization.
- **Reviewer Responsibility**: Reviewers must adhere to the Journal's confidentiality agreements, ensuring that any data or manuscript details shared with them during the review process are not disclosed to third parties without explicit consent from the authors or editors.

7. Data Retention and Deletion

- **Retention Period**: The Journal will retain personal data, submission materials, and other relevant documents for a period consistent with legal requirements or for as long as necessary for the fulfillment of the Journal's objectives.
    - For instance, personal data may be retained for archival purposes, ensuring traceability of the academic record and compliance with ethical standards.
- **Data Deletion**: Data that is no longer required for publication purposes will be securely deleted

following retention guidelines, ensuring that no personally identifiable data remains unless required for legal or archival purposes.

8. Compliance with Legal and Ethical Standards

- **Adherence to Data Protection Laws**: The Journal is committed to adhering to all applicable data protection regulations and other relevant national and international data protection laws.
- **Ethical Considerations in Data Use**: The Journal will ensure that any data shared in published articles adheres to ethical research standards, particularly concerning human subjects, patient data, and sensitive medical information.

9. Dispute Resolution and Complaints

- **Reporting Concerns**: Any concerns regarding data protection, security, or ethical breaches may be reported to the editorial team for investigation. The Journal will address complaints or inquiries related to data protection promptly and transparently.
- **Data Breaches**: In the unlikely event of a data breach, the Journal will notify affected individuals in accordance with legal obligations and take immediate steps to mitigate any harm caused.

10. Updates and Revisions to the Policy

- **Policy Review**: This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains in compliance with evolving data protection laws and best practices. Any significant changes to the policy will be communicated to authors, reviewers, and other stakeholders.

The *Journal* is dedicated to safeguarding the privacy and security of all data associated with the publication process.

This policy provides a framework for handling personal and research data responsibly, ensuring compliance with data protection laws, and fostering transparent, ethical data sharing practices. The Journal remains committed to advancing medical research while upholding the highest standards of data integrity and confidentiality.

Scientific Misconduct Policy

Overview

The *Journal* is committed to upholding the highest standards of scientific integrity and ethical conduct in the publication of medical research.

This policy outlines the procedures for identifying, investigating, and addressing scientific misconduct in accordance with the best practices of academic publishing. Scientific misconduct includes any action that undermines the integrity of the research process, compromises public trust in scientific findings, or violates ethical standards.

1. Definition of Scientific Misconduct

Scientific misconduct includes, but is not limited to, the following behaviors:

- **Data Falsification and Fabrication**: The manipulation or creation of data, results, or methodologies in a manner that misrepresents the actual research.
- **Plagiarism**: The unacknowledged use of another person's work, ideas, data, or text, either through direct copying or paraphrasing, without proper citation.

- **Duplicate Publication**: The submission of the same work, in whole or in part, for publication in more than one journal without proper acknowledgment or permission.
- **Authorship Misrepresentation**: Including individuals as authors who did not significantly contribute to the research, or failing to include individuals who made substantial contributions to the work.
- **Improper Peer Review**: Involvement in biased, inappropriate, or non-objective peer review, including reviewing a manuscript in which the reviewer has a conflict of interest or using confidential information for personal gain.
- **Failure to Obtain Ethical Approval**: Conducting research involving human or animal subjects without appropriate ethical review and informed consent, or failing to disclose conflicts of interest.
- **Non-Compliance with Research Integrity Standards**: This includes non-compliance with established research guidelines, protocols, and ethical standards for medical research.

2. Responsibilities of Authors, Editors, and Reviewers

- **Authors**: Authors are responsible for ensuring that their work adheres to the highest standards of

scientific integrity. They must ensure that their data are accurate, their findings are honest, and that they provide proper attribution for others' work. Authors must also disclose any conflicts of interest that may affect the objectivity of the research.

- **Editors**: The Editorial Team, including the Editor-in-Chief and the Editorial Board, is responsible for ensuring that the manuscripts published in the Journal meet ethical standards. Editors must be vigilant in detecting possible cases of misconduct and act in a timely and transparent manner when issues arise.
- **Reviewers**: Reviewers are responsible for providing unbiased, thorough, and constructive feedback. They must avoid any conflict of interest and must not use confidential information for personal or professional gain.

3. Identification of Scientific Misconduct

The Journal takes allegations of scientific misconduct seriously and is committed to identifying and addressing them in a transparent and fair manner. Misconduct may be identified through the following channels:

- **Allegations from Authors or Other Researchers**: Any concerns raised by authors or

researchers about potential misconduct will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

- **Editorial Review**: Editors will be proactive in monitoring submitted manuscripts for signs of misconduct, such as duplicate publication, plagiarism, or data inconsistencies.
- **Peer Reviewer Concerns**: Peer reviewers may raise concerns if they suspect any form of misconduct during the review process.
- **Post-Publication**: Readers or other researchers who identify potential misconduct after an article has been published can submit formal complaints to the Journal.

4. Procedures for Investigating Allegations of Misconduct

When allegations of misconduct are made, the *Journal* will follow a fair and systematic investigation process:

- **Initial Assessment**: Upon receiving a report of potential misconduct, the Editorial Board will conduct an initial assessment to determine the validity of the claim. If the allegation appears credible, further investigation will be initiated.
- **Investigation**: The Editorial Board will initiate a thorough investigation into the alleged misconduct. This may involve contacting the

authors, reviewers, or any other parties involved in the research. In cases of plagiarism, the Journal may use plagiarism detection software to assess the claim.

- **Institutional Involvement**: If necessary, the investigation will involve the author's affiliated institution or funding bodies. The Journal will follow established guidelines for dealing with misconduct in collaboration with relevant institutions or organizations.
- **Confidentiality**: During the investigation process, confidentiality will be maintained to protect the identities and reputations of the individuals involved. Information will only be shared with relevant parties involved in the investigation process.

5. Possible Outcomes of the Investigation

If misconduct is substantiated, the *GACOPA Medical Journal* will take appropriate action, which may include:

- **Correction**: If the issue involves a minor error or oversight, the Journal may issue a formal correction or clarification.
- **Retracting the Article**: In cases of significant misconduct (e.g., data fabrication, plagiarism), the Journal may retract the article. A formal retraction

notice will be published, which will include a clear explanation of the reasons for retraction.

- **Formal Warning**: In some cases, a formal warning may be issued to the author(s) involved. This may include a note added to the article indicating that the work was subject to an investigation for misconduct.
- **Publication Ban**: In the most severe cases, where misconduct is found to be intentional and egregious, the author(s) may be banned from submitting future work to the Journal.
- **Referral to Institutions**: If the misconduct is serious, the issue may be escalated to the author's academic institution, research organization, or relevant regulatory authorities.

6. Post-Investigation Transparency

The *GACOPA Medical Journal* is committed to transparency regarding the outcomes of any investigation into scientific misconduct:

- **Public Disclosure**: In cases of retraction or significant correction, the Journal will publish a public notice detailing the nature of the misconduct and the actions taken, while respecting confidentiality and legal considerations.

- **Documentation**: The Journal will maintain a record of all reported cases of scientific misconduct and the actions taken in response. This will be kept confidential but may be shared with relevant institutions or stakeholders when required.

7. Prevention of Scientific Misconduct

The Journal promotes the following best practices:

- **Author Education**: Authors will be educated about the importance of research ethics and integrity. The Journal will provide clear guidelines on proper authorship, citation, data management, and ethical research practices.
- **Plagiarism Detection**: The Journal will use plagiarism detection software to assess manuscripts for potential plagiarism prior to publication.
- **Training for Reviewers and Editors**: Reviewers and editors will be trained on how to identify and report signs of misconduct during the peer review process.
- **Clear Ethical Guidelines**: The Journal will maintain and update clear ethical guidelines for authors, reviewers, and editors, outlining the

responsibilities and expectations related to scientific integrity.

8. Appeals Process

If authors or other involved parties disagree with the outcome of an investigation or disciplinary action, they may appeal the decision. The appeal process will be as follows:

- **Submission of Appeal**: The concerned party may submit a formal written appeal to the Editor-in-Chief, providing additional evidence or arguments.
- **Review of Appeal**: The appeal will be reviewed by a separate editorial board or an independent committee that was not involved in the initial investigation.
- **Final Decision**: The final decision on the appeal will be communicated to the concerned party, and the decision will be considered final.

This Policy provides a clear and transparent framework for addressing allegations of misconduct while maintaining fairness for all parties involved.

COUNCIL FOR PUBLICATION ETHICS (CPE)

