

The roles and responsibilities of editors in biomedical journals

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Editors edit manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals for publication and in this tedious journey they are to work with the journal owners (societies for example), authors, reviewers and sometimes press and archiving authorities. Editors work maintaining the norms and ethics, they must enjoy the editorial freedom and upgrade themselves.

Developing (and revising) the editorial policy is an important responsibility of editors and it encompasses to settle the scope and area of coverage of the journal, timing (frequency) of publications, style and organization of articles (better to follow well established guidelines for reporting research works, e.g., CARE for CAse REports, STrengthening the Reporting of OBServational studies in Epidemiology (STROBE) for observational studies, the CONSORT guidelines for the reporting of randomized trials, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) for systematic reviews and meta-analysis¹; ethical issues (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)², time-line of manuscript processing, article processing charges (if any) and many more. Editorial policy is often in line with the motto/principles of the society that owns the journal.

Following submission and checking by the editorial staff for essential components and contents (additional documents) as per editorial policy and instruction for authors, one or more members (editor-in-chief or subject editor, if designated such) of editorial board scan the manuscript for suitability and fitness to the journal and then they search and find reviewers (at least two). Editors invite reviewers for reviewing the manuscript in

a stipulated time (and often a reporting guidance is provided) guided by the editorial policy, remind reviewers (by editorial staffs), if needed and collects reviewers' comments. Editors check the reviewers' comments, judge these (and edit, if felt so) and invite revision by the corresponding author (editors may add editor's comments as well but editors are not reviewers of their own journal).² It is not necessary that all comments or decisions of reviewers are conveyed to the corresponding authors, editors have the right to filter these. Editors may by-pass the review process in suitable cases.

After receiving the revised manuscript, editors check the revised version and may consider for a re-review or place to the editorial board meeting (in most journals). In some journals, after selection (rather acceptance), an associate editor is given the charge of editing (polishing) the manuscript for compliance to the journal style. Some journal suggests language editing services. It is the authority of editor (editor-in-chief) to finally accept or reject a manuscript and select timing of publication of an accepted manuscript (even retraction, after publication).² Editorial decisions largely depend on relevance, originality, quality and contribution of the research work to relevant field. In this process editors are not influenced by owner of the journal. Editors maintain the confidentiality throughout the process of review (open peer review is becoming popular now-a-days) and editors will not use information from manuscripts for their personal benefit. Editors must declare their conflicts of interest on a regular basis.

Editor (executive editor or managing editor) often takes the responsibility of archiving of the published articles through institutional authority (library) or archiving authority. Comments on published articles (post-publication peer review) are given emphasis and should

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regularly be published with responses from author and editors.

To summarize, editors select and prepare manuscripts to convey scientific information to the audience through correction, condensation, organization and modification. The intention of editing is to produce true, complete, correct, consistent and accurate work. Editor's duties are to read the contents, re-write the text (if necessary), develop editorial policy and publication's style, verify the scientific facts, work with authors to help their ideas. Editors comment to improve the quality of manuscripts

following the guidelines. Any controversy should be resolved following committee on publication ethics (COPE) guidance.³

REFERENCES

1. www.equator-network.org.
2. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals. Updated May 2023
3. A_Short_Guide_to_Ethical_Editing.pdf) and WAME (<http://wame.org/conflict-of-interest-in-peer-reviewed-medical-journals>). available from COPE (<https://publicationethics.org/files/>