

Ethical guidelines

Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs

1.0 Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this document is to enhance the quality and protect the integrity of scientific publishing in addiction specialty journals. It is written in the interests of all those who engage in the scientific endeavor and those who put trust in the truthfulness of the scientific output. To that end, this document provides guidance to authors, editors and other individuals regarding ethical and procedural issues that affect the integrity of scientific publishing. These guidelines were developed to deal with the growing complexity of decision-making in addiction journal publishing, which often requires critical judgment on the part of editors, reviewers, authors, publishers and others with regard to ethical issues. The guidelines address two broad areas: 1) the responsibilities of authors, and 2) the responsibilities of editors, journal staff and journal owners.

2.0 Responsibilities of Authors

The responsibilities of authors include but are not limited to study design, ethical approval of research, data analysis, authorship credits, conflict of interests, redundant publication, and plagiarism.

2.1 Study Design, Ethical Approval and Informed Consent

Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs operates in accordance with the [Farmington Consensus](#) and its ethical code. It is expected that research concerning human subjects will comply with the [Declaration of Helsinki](#) by the World Medical Association. Research reported in NAD should be well justified, well planned, appropriately designed, scrupulously analyzed and honestly interpreted. All relevant ethical safeguards should be met in relation to subject protection, and where appropriate, studies should be appraised by an ethical review committee.

In studies where informed consent is needed (e.g. clinical and experimental research), research subjects should be given enough information to form a clear understanding of what participation involves in order to make a truly informed decision about whether or not to participate in the research. Formal supervision, usually the responsibility of the principal investigator, should be provided for all research projects.

2.2 Authorship Credits

Authorship of a scientific report refers to the origin of a literary production, not just to the experimentation, data collection or other work that led up to it. All persons named as authors should

- have made a major contribution to the work reported, and
- be prepared to take public responsibility for its contents

Early agreement on the precise roles of the contributors and collaborators, and on matters of authorship and publication, is advised. All contributors to a research project or other scholarly publication should be advised of their authorship responsibilities and given the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the manuscript. Initial inclusion in the planning of a scientific paper does not necessarily warrant authorship credit unless the prospective author makes a substantive contribution as described below. The lead author should periodically review the status of authorship credits and substantive contributions with all prospective collaborators, in order to avoid disputes.

The award of authorship should balance intellectual contributions to the conception, design, analysis and writing of the study against the collection of data and other routine work. If there is no task that can reasonably be attributed to a particular individual, then that individual should not be credited with authorship.

All listed authors on a paper should have been personally and substantially involved in the work leading to the paper. Involvement in data collection and other routine tasks does not necessarily warrant authorship credit. Similarly, merely granting access to clinical samples or being the head of a research unit or grant is not by itself sufficient to justify a share in authorship.

If professional writers employed by pharmaceutical companies, medical agencies, or other parties have written the paper, then their names should be included, and any conflicts of interest declared.

Authors should not allow their name to be used on a piece of work merely to add credibility to the content.

2.3 Redundant Publication

Redundant publication occurs when two or more papers, without full cross-reference, share any of the same data. Authors are expected to ensure that no significant part of the submitted material has been published previously and that it is not concurrently being considered by another journal. An exception to this general position may be made when previous publication has been limited to another language, to local publication in report form, or to publication of a conference abstract. In all such instances, authors should consult the editor.

Publication in different papers of subsets of data from the same population of subjects in a study may be acceptable if publication in one article would render it unreasonably long and complex. In such cases, cross-referencing to the other relevant publication(s) must occur. Re-publication of a paper in another language is acceptable, provided that there is full and prominent disclosure of its original source at the time of submission and provided that any necessary copyrights are respected.

At the time of submission, authors should disclose details of related papers, even if in a different language, and similar papers in press. When in doubt, authors should provide the editor at the time of submission with copies of published or submitted reports that are related to that submission.

2.4 Plagiarism

Plagiarism ranges from the unreferenced use of others' published and unpublished ideas, including research grant applications, to submission under "new" authorship of a complete paper, sometimes in a different language. It may occur at any stage of planning, research, writing, or publication; it applies to print and electronic versions.

All sources should be disclosed through appropriate citation or quotation conventions, and if a large amount of other people's written or illustrative material is to be used, permission must be sought.

2.5 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a situation or relationship in which professional, personal, or financial considerations could be seen by a fair-minded person as potentially in conflict with independence of judgment. It has also been described as a situation or relationship which, when revealed later, would make a reasonable reader feel misled or deceived. A conflict may be personal, commercial, political, academic or financial. "Financial" interests may include employment, research funding, stock or share ownership, payment for lectures or travel, consultancies, and company support for staff. Conflict of interest is not in itself wrongdoing.

The potential for conflict of interest in the addiction field is enhanced by any relationship or funding connected with the tobacco industry, the alcohol beverage industry, for-profit health care systems, private hospitals, the pharmaceutical industry, and "social aspect organizations" that receive their primary support from these sources.

There are three levels of conflict of interest: real, apparent, and potential. A real conflict of interest means that the author, or the administrative unit with which the author has an employment relationship, has a financial or other interest that could unduly influence the author's

position with respect to the subject matter being considered. An apparent conflict of interest exists when an interest would not necessarily influence the author but could result in the author's objectivity being questioned by others. A potential conflict of interest exists with an interest that any reasonable person could be uncertain whether or not it should be reported.

Each author should declare to the editor any interests that could constitute a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest with respect to his/her involvement in the publication, between (1) commercial entities and the participant personally, and (2) commercial entities and the administrative unit with which the participant has an employment relationship. "Commercial entity" refers to any company, association (e.g., trade association), organization, or other unit with commercial interests.

Sources of funding for the study, review, or other item should be declared in the final publication.

3.0 Responsibilities of Editors/Journal Staff/Journal Owners

Journal editors can have a significant influence on the practice of addiction science, as well as treatment and prevention. Editors need to promote the highest standards of ethical practice in order to advance addiction science and to maintain the trust of the people their journals serve. The ethical responsibilities of editors include the ethical decision-making, the peer review process, advertising, conflict of interest, and how to deal with scientific misconduct.

Editors' decisions to accept or reject a paper for publication should be based only on the paper's importance, originality, and clarity, and the study's relevance to the remit of the journal. All original studies should be peer reviewed before publication, taking into full account possible bias due to related or conflicting interests.

Studies that challenge previous work published in the journal should be given an especially sympathetic hearing. Studies reporting negative results should not be excluded. Editors must treat all submitted papers as confidential. When a published paper is subsequently found to contain major flaws, editors must accept responsibility for correcting the record prominently and promptly.

3.2 Peer Review

Addiction journals should be committed to peer review, and research reports and scientific reviews should go through this process. As regards the extent to which other material (e.g., commentary, book reviews) will be so reviewed, we see that as a matter for editorial discretion. Peer reviewers are external experts chosen by editors to provide written opinions, with the aim of improving the study. Reviewers are also expected to behave in an ethical manner and the editor should consider breaches of the following guidelines as instances of misconduct no less serious than comparable actions by authors. Editors must treat all submitted papers as confidential. The duty of confidentiality in the assessment of a manuscript must be maintained by expert reviewers, and this extends to reviewers' colleagues who may be asked (with the editor's permission) to give opinions on specific sections. Referees should be told that their access to the papers on which they have been requested to comment is in strict confidence. Confidentiality should not be broken by pre-publication statements on the content of the submission. Manuscripts sent to reviewers should be returned to the editor or destroyed.

Reviewers and editors should not make any use of the data, arguments, or interpretations, unless they have the authors' permission. Reviewers should provide speedy, accurate, courteous, unbiased and justifiable reports. If reviewers suspect misconduct, they should write in confidence to the editor.

To enhance the quality and efficacy of the peer review system, addiction journals should audit the quality of peer review on a continuous basis, and where possible, provide training to enhance the quality of peer review. Journals should publish accurate descriptions of their peer review, selection, and appeals processes. Journals should also provide regular audits of their acceptance rates and publication times.

In refereeing journal supplements, an editorial note should be published to indicate whether or not the papers have been peer-reviewed.

3.3 Conflict of Interest

Referees should be asked to declare to the editor if they have a conflict of interest in relation to the material which they are invited to review, and if in doubt they should consult the editor.' Conflict of interest' is defined as a situation in which professional, personal, or financial considerations could be seen by a fair-minded person as potentially in conflict with the editor's independence of judgment. Conflict of interest is not in itself wrongdoing.

To protect the independence of the editorial process, the owner or another body that may influence the editorial process should be declared, and sources of support from the alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceutical or other relevant interests should be published in the journal.

When a journal publishes journal supplements, an indication will be given of sources of support for their production. Editors should also disclose relevant conflicts of interest to their readers. Sometimes editors may need to withdraw from the review and selection process for the relevant submission.

Conflicts of interest, where relevant, must be declared to editors by researchers, authors, and reviewers.

To further enhance the integrity of science, editors are urged to adopt a more complete disclosure policy. Such a policy should require contributors to disclose to journal editors at least the following information:

- Sources of funding for the study, review, or other item being published.
- Sources of funding for the submitted paper must be declared and should be published.
- Financial or other significant relations (e.g., consulting, speaker fees, corporate advisory committee memberships, expert testimony given in legal cases) of the author and the authors' immediate family in the last 5 years with companies, trade associations, unions, or groups (including civic associations and public interest groups) that may gain or lose financially from the results or conclusions in the study, review, editorial, or letter.

If an editor considers he/she may be subject to Conflict of Interest, advice from a co-editor may be sought and a co-editor or guest editor should have full responsibility for editing the manuscript.

3.4 Complaints and appeals

Complaints concerning policies, procedures and the actions of the editorial staff are welcome, as they give us the opportunity to improve the journal. Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs also welcomes complaints concerning errors originating from the research process or publication process, such as severe typographical mistakes, and suspicions of scientific misconduct, redundant publication and authorship misidentification. Correcting the scientific literature is important part of providing accurate and honest information to the readership. When necessary, we will publish expressions of concern, corrections and retractions.

The review process frequently involves scientific disagreement and disagreement with undesirable editorial decisions. These kinds of disagreements are not necessarily foundations for valid author appeals. *Requests by authors* for appeal can be considered if they involve failures of process, such as improper editorial behaviour or severe misjudgments in the editorial process.

Author requests for appeal, and complaints concerning content and policies, should be addressed to the editor-in-chief. These will be handled by the editor-in-chief and the editorial board. Complaints concerning the actions of the editor-in-chief should be addressed to the chair of the editorial board.