Ethic Clinic - Authorship Issues
When authors’ problems become your problems!

Case 1
- Permissions

Case 2
- Ethics-Plagiarism and Conflict of Interest

Case 3
- IRB

Case 4
- Author Order

Moderator - Jennifer Mahar, Managing Editor and Executive Peer Review Manager, Editorial Evolution and Independent Contractor with Origin Editorial
Case 1

Permissions and Copyright

- Do you have a well-defined permission and copyright policy?
- Is this completely handled by your publisher or the editorial office?
- Permissions can be handled with a corrigenda, correction, publisher’s note, etc. Do you have a pre- and post-publication policy and workflow?
- Copyright problems bring larger problems
- Do you have in-house council? Who makes the decisions when you have a similar figure?
- If you have invited papers do you help authors with permissions? Do you pay for the permissions if payment is required?
Case 2

Plagiarism/Ethics

- What are your first steps?
- Do you acknowledge the reader? If you ever respond to an author/reader/reviewer be careful in your wording. Get council for your response, if possible.
- What is your workflow for investigating?
- Do you have a publications committee?
- Do you ask for the publisher’s help? Are they involved?
- Does the EIC handle on his own, without consultation?
Case 2 continued

Plagiarism/Ethics

- Do you have your workflow written down? Is it available to the readers?

- This is how you use your instructions to authors to do more than tell them about production requirements. This is how you improve your everyday processing.

- Have you published your journal’s ethical policies? Are they visible, and have expectations been communicated to the authors, (e.g., by answering various ethical attestation questions as part of the submission process, one of which is that their submission is free of plagiarism/significant amounts of overlapping text)?
Case 3

Conflict of Interest

- What is your policy?

- Be prepared for this to take a large amount of your time – cases can take many months to resolve.

- Who reviews your forms? Do you use the ICMJE forms? Are they uploaded to your online submission site? Can the reviewers see these forms? Are the forms published or are you crosschecking the information on each form with the COI section in the submitted paper? If you are checking these forms, at what point in the process are you doing so?
Case 3 continued

Conflict of Interest

- Do you have a dollar amount that is used as a threshold when declaring competing interests?
- How long is a conflict relevant at your journal?
- In addition to the COI statement/form, do you have an ethical attestation statement the submitting author has to check confirming that the COI statement is complete and honest? Are the consequences of not answering that question truthfully explained?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure the accuracy of the COI statement? All authors, the submitting author, the editorial office or a combination of all?
Case 4

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- What is the standard IRB policy for your journal?
- For foreign approvals, do you require an official translation?
- Who reviews each manuscript for IRB approval? Do you push back to authors who don’t have mention of IRB in their manuscript? When?
- What is your process for correcting if discovered an author did not include in a manuscript?
Case 5

Changing the Author Order and Contributions to the Manuscript

- Does your submission system help you to identify if a change has occurred?
- Do you review each version for author changes? Do you note not only additions and deletions but changes in order?
- What is your mechanism for resolving an addition or deletion? Do you ask the corresponding author or all of the authors if a change is acceptable? Do you need this confirmation in writing, email? Does your online system provide a tool for this workflow? Did you write the email that is sent to the authors without legal council?
- How does the production office/publisher handle change to authorship? Do they query the editorial office? Is the author removed without question? Does the production office handle this workflow? Is the Editor involved?
Changing the Author Order and Contributions to the Manuscript

- Does your journal require a contribution/contributorship statement? This statement lists exactly what each author performed in respect to the manuscript.

- Where is this contribution statement available?
  - Is it a separate heading? Is it in the acknowledgement?
  - How does this get transferred to the paper from the system?
  - Who reviews that the statement in the system is the same as what is listed in the text of the manuscript?

- In one of my current fields the rate of author changes is extraordinary, this appears to be heavily cultural, these account for over 50% of our submissions. They swap authors like Halloween candy.
Example

Deceased Author Policy

If an author passes away during the publication process or is included as an author on a manuscript submitted after their passing, the editorial office must request written permission from the deceased family.
Example: Deceased Author Workflow

1) If the Editorial Office becomes aware that an author of a submitted or in-production manuscript is now deceased, the corresponding author will need to be sent the “Publication Request for Deceased Author” document. The corresponding author may use the provided template information in this document to request permission to publish from the family. This permission is required.

3) The editorial office will need to ensure that written permission is received from the family via the corresponding author and this permission is uploaded into the online system.

4) A manuscript should not be accepted prior to receiving a deceased author's family's permission to publish.
Example Letter:

We are so very sorry to hear of the death of your colleague, Dr. (INSERT NAME OF DECEASED AUTHOR), who is a co-author on the paper, "XXXXX", which you submitted to XXXXX. It is our policy to require permission from a deceased author’s family to publish a submitted paper. The deceased author’s familial or legal proxy holder will need to provide written permission; please see the following letter for use in requesting this permission.

I am sorry to ask you to perform this extra step in the process at this difficult time, but we must have this permission from a legal standpoint. Please let us know if you have any questions or if we can be of further help.

Best regards,

XXXX
Create well defined Policy – some will be outward facing, some internal, but always have some place to point regarding policy on each issue.

Create a workflow to support each policy – consider a policy and procedures handbook for your journal. Have documentation detailing workflow for each step in your process. These can range from a bulleted sentence or two all the way to a full fledged shared handbook.

The most simple of policies become very complicated without a well-defined workflow.
Thank you!

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