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Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine

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الجمعية العربية للعلوم الجنائية والطب الشرعي
Arab Society for Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine

The Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (AJFSFM)

Author Guidelines

Open Access



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Introduction

The Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (AJFSFM) is a peer-reviewed, open access (CC BY-NC), international journal for publishing original contributions in various fields of forensic science. These fields include, but are not limited to forensic pathology and histochemistry, toxicology (drugs, alcohol, etc.), forensic biology (serology, human DNA profiling, entomology, population genetics), forensic chemistry (inks, paints, dyes, explosives, fire accelerants), psychiatry and hypnotics, forensic anthropology and archeology, forensic odontology, fingerprints and impressions, firearms and tool marks, white collar crimes (counterfeit and forgery; questioned documents), digital forensics; cyber-crimes, criminal justice and crime scene investigation, as well as many other disciplines where science and medicine interact with the law.

Article Types

Original Research Paper: Full-length research report of an original study, carried out prospectively or retrospectively, by an individual scientist or the collaboration of a group of scientists, reporting innovative findings that further the knowledge about a topic important to the forensic science.

Review Article: This type of publication consists of work based on summarizing and synthesizing knowledge in a specific area carried out by other scientists who already have an understanding of the topic; however, the authors of a review article would normally have worked and published primary literature in the area they are writing about. A review article should include a critical assessment of the works cited, explanations of conflicts in the literature, and analysis of the field.

Technical / Brief Notes: This type of publication describes technical aspects of a field or a report on a procedure or method,

or work based on validation of methodologies or techniques.

Case Reports: This is a brief description or analysis of one or more cases related to forensic science or forensic medicine.

Rapid Communications: This type of publication consists of research work that extends previously published research, including the reporting of additional controls and confirmatory results in other settings, as well as negative results. Authors must clearly acknowledge any previous work, both published and unpublished, upon which the current research work was based.

Letter to the editor: Letters may discuss previously published material or commentaries in the Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (AJFSFM) or any issue of interest to the Arab Society for Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (ASFSFM). Letters commenting on published material are shared with the original authors to give them an opportunity to respond.

Response to Letter: This is a response from the author to a letter commenting on previously published work. It is usually written by the author of that work.

Editorial or Invited Commentary: This is a commentary on a specific topic or issue written by the Editor-in-Chief (EIC) or by someone else upon the special invitation of the EIC.

Book Reviews: Review of a book or other publication of interest to the scientific community in the fields of forensic science, forensic medicine and criminalistics. These articles provide a description of the book being reviewed, the strengths and weaknesses of the book, and the intended audience.

Conference Proceedings: Conference Proceedings are a compilation of research papers presented at a scientific meeting, symposium, or conference and are produced from the manuscripts received from authors.



Terms and Conditions of Publishing in the AJFSFM

The journal welcomes original contributions from scholars, researchers, academics, and forensic science practitioners from all over the world, under the following terms and conditions:

1. Papers must be written in Arabic or English.
2. Papers written in Arabic should also have an abstract in English. Similarly, manuscripts prepared in English must also have an Arabic abstract.
3. Authors who cannot provide abstract in Arabic language should submit a written request to the Editor-in-Chief (EIC) at the time of manuscript submission for the Arabic translation of the abstract written in English and vice versa for Arabic articles.
4. Each manuscript must be accompanied by a statement that the manuscript has not been submitted for publication elsewhere in Arabic or English, unless it was a conference paper. If it was a conference paper, then this should be noted together with a statement that the paper has been completely re-written and that either:
 - i. It was not originally copyrighted or
 - ii. That the author has cleared any necessary permission with the copyright owner if it has been previously copyrighted.
5. Previous publication in another language should also be disclosed.
6. All papers are refereed, and the Editor-in-Chief reserves the right to refuse any manuscript, whether on invitation or otherwise, and to make suggestions and/or modifications before publication.
7. AJFSFM place great emphasis on the originality and quality of the papers published in this journal. Submitted manuscripts are first reviewed by the EIC who has the authority to reject the paper or he can refer to one of the Associate Editors (AE) for further review. The AE evaluates the paper and decides whether it describes a sufficient body of work to support a major advance in a particular field. If the AE does not judge the manuscript suitable for the journal, alone or in consultation with other AEs, the manuscript may be rejected outright, without external peer review, with the reasons outlined in the decision letter sent to the author. If the AE does judge the manuscript suitable for the journal, it will then be subjected to external peer review with the consent of EIC.

8. Peer-Review Process

A full double-blind refereeing process is applied in which papers are sent to 3-4 experts for their peer review. The opinions of up to three experts are sought to evaluate the manuscript fully with respect to its significance, relevance, quality, and clarity. On receipt of all reviewer comments, and potentially further consultation amongst other editors, a decision is rendered by the AE and co-signed by the EIC, who will send the decision to the corresponding author. The whole process may take 2-3 months. Possible decisions include:

- Accept
- Accept with minor revision
- Accept with major revision
- Reject

For papers, which require changes, the same reviewers will be used to ensure that the quality of the revised paper is acceptable.

Revisions deadline

- i. Please note that articles that are sent back to the author for revision need to be returned within 60 days (and within 20 days for subsequent revisions). A reminder will be sent in the second month. Any articles that are received after the two-month period of revision will be considered a re-submission.
- ii. AJFSFM shall furnish authors of accepted papers with proofs for the correction of printing errors. The proofs shall be returned within 14 calendar days of submittal. Reviewers and the AJFSFM shall not be held responsible for errors, which are the result of author's oversight.
- iii. Manuscripts which have been accepted for publication will be freely available online. AJFSFM is an Open Access (OA) journal and strictly adhere to the policy as per the terms and conditions laid down in Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial license (CC BY-NC).
- iv. Use for commercial purposes of the article is strictly prohibited.
- v. For detailed instructions regarding the preparation of manuscripts, an online submission and author/publishing guidelines, kindly visit AJFSFM websites:

<http://journals.nauss.edu.sa/index.php/AJFSFM/issue/current>

<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/>



Manuscript Preparation

The AJFSFM requirements for manuscript publication are generally in accordance with the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals (<http://www.icmje.org/>). These requirements may also be found in the introductory issue of the AJFSFM, the Journal of Pharmacology & Pharmacotherapeutics (<http://www.jpharmacol.com/article.asp?issn=0976-500X;year=2010;volume=1;issue=1;page=42;epage=58;aulast=>), Saudi Medical Journal (<http://www.smj.org.sa/pdf/files/UniformRequirements.pdf>), and many other journals. The AJFSFM guidelines integrate the Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals, and are intended to help authors prepare their papers to meet the specific requirements of the AJFSFM so that their work may proceed smoothly through the publication process. Manuscripts may be written in English or Arabic and submitted online: <http://journals.nauss.edu.sa/index.php/AJFSFM/about/submissions#onlineSubmissions>.

Text Formatting

Manuscript, including title page, abstract, the main text, conclusion, acknowledgments, references, individual tables and legends, must be typewritten (**Times New Roman**) with a **font size of 12**, on 8 1/2 x 11 inch (21.5 x 28 cm) or size **A4 paper**, with margins of **at least 1 inch (2.5 cm)** and **double spacing**. Insert page numbers consecutively, beginning with the title page. Put the page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page.

Tables, figures and figure legends are uploaded as separate files on the manuscript submission website. Figure legends should be included on a separate page from the figures themselves. If the abstract is not typed directly into Manuscript Central, please submit that as a separate upload. Manuscripts must be accompanied by a covering letter signed by the author and all co-authors. The AJFSFM recommends that authors should consider having their manuscripts professionally edited prior to submission; even more so for authors for whom English is a second language.

Word Limits

Original articles should be up to 5000 words, (excluding abstract and references), and have no more than six figures and tables.

Review articles should have a maximum length up to 6000 words, (excluding abstract and references), plus 4-5 tables or figures. Subheadings should be used within the article to highlight the content of different sections.

Case reports should be prepared in a narrative style and comprise an abstract; a short introduction stating the reasons for reporting the case; the case report including history, investigations and outcomes; and a discussion referring to the relevant literature. Maximum length 2000 words with no more than two figures and tables.

Letters to the Editor may deal with comments on recently published papers in the journal or other observations that the authors may feel warrants publication. These are usually up to 800 words.

Shot communications are limited to 3000 words and are not subdivided. The paper should contain an abstract, main body and references, and contain no more than 6 figures or tables, combined.

Images in Forensics should include a brief description, no longer than 1200 words, of a particular finding in a "Case Report" format with high quality images, followed by a separate discussion of the features of the lesion/injury/finding

Editorials referring to research published elsewhere in that issue of the journal, or to important events in the specialty. Editorials are usually commissioned. Maximum length 1600 words.

Title Page Information

Title. Titles are often used in information-retrieval systems and, therefore, the title of the submitted work should be concise, informative and both in Arabic and English. Avoid abbreviations and formulae where possible.

Author names and affiliations. Please clearly indicate the given name(s) and family name(s) of each author and check that all names are accurately spelled. Present the authors' affiliation addresses (where the actual work was done) below the names. Indicate all affiliations with a lower-case superscript letter immediately after the author's name and in front of the appropriate address. Provide the full postal address of each affiliation, including the country name and, if available, the e-mail address of each author.

Corresponding author. Clearly indicate who will handle correspondence at all stages of refereeing and publishing, also post-publication. **Ensure that the e-mail address is given and that contact details are kept up to date by the corresponding author.**

Present/permanent address. If an author has moved since the work described in the article was done, or was visiting at the time, a 'Present address' (or 'Permanent address') may be indicated as a footnote to that author's name. The address at which the author actually did the work must be retained as the main, affiliation address. Superscript Arabic numerals are used for such footnotes.



Abstract

Abstract should be bilingual (English & Arabic). Authors who cannot provide abstract in Arabic language should submit a written request to the Editor-in-Chief at the time of manuscript submission for the Arabic translation of the abstract written in English and vice versa of Arabic Abstracts . Each abstracts should be no more than 200 words. Although the AJFSFM uses unstructured abstracts; however, the abstract should include the following – background, brief description of methods and results (give specific data and their statistical significance, if possible), and conclusion. Emphasize new and important aspects of the study or observations. The word “Abstract” should be in Title case and bolded.

Authors should write their Arabic summaries using terms according to the Unified Medical Dictionary (Council of Arab Ministers of Health/WHO/Arab Medical Union ALESCO, 3rd ed.). Important observations and findings must be made clear.

Keywords

Immediately after the abstract, provide a maximum of 5 keywords, that will aid in cross-indexing the article. **The first keyword must be forensic science**; other keywords must enable abstracters to properly categorize the manuscript so interested researchers can easily find it in journal article data bases.

Use terms from the medical subject headings (MeSH) list of Index Medicus; recent terms may be used if not on the list. Frequently, **the second keyword is a subfield of forensic science, e.g. forensic anthropology, forensic pathology, or DNA typing**. Be sparing with abbreviations: only abbreviations firmly established in the field may be eligible.

Text Structure

The text of observational and experimental articles is usually – but not necessarily – divided into sections with headings. AJFSFM make use of headings which include Introduction, Methods (or Materials and Methods), Results, Discussion and Conclusion.

Long articles may need subheadings within the sections to clarify their content, especially the Results and Discussion sections. Other types of articles, such as Case Reports are likely to need different headings and subheadings. Generally, avoid overuse of subheadings, especially in the Methods section. Headings should be numbered, bolded and subheadings italicized.

Introduction

This must include the adequate background and objectives of the work, avoiding a detailed literature surveys or lengthy result summaries of previously published relevant studies.

Materials and Methods

Experimental methods must be presented in a concise and informative way with enough detail to enable the work to be reproduced. Any published methods must have references and modifications should be described. In studies of diagnostic accuracy, the methods section should mention the inclusion and exclusion criteria of patients or healthy subjects involved in the study together with information on patient recruitment. Textual re-use of portions of an author’s previous work in the methods section will be considered, providing that an explanatory note is included with appropriate referencing: “The methods are exactly as published in the previous publication....”.

Statistical Analysis

Any calculation sections must clarify a practical development taken from a theoretical basis. The author(s) should adequately describe or reference all statistical procedures used in the current study in a paragraph at the end of the methods section. It is expected that the statistical tests used are appropriately selected and applied, with an indication of the related assumptions and how they have been tested. The ambiguous use of statistical terms should be avoided such as random with the meaning of haphazard, correlation instead of association, etc. In presenting results, all the participants in the study must be accounted for. Exact p-values and confidence intervals are to be used.

Results

Present results in a logical sequence according to the flow of information in the text, tables and illustrations. Do not repeat all the data in the tables or illustrations. Emphasize or summarize only important observation and avoid repetition of all of the data.

Discussion

Highlight new and important aspects of the study and any conclusions based on them. Be concise and avoid repetition of any data and material given in the Introduction or the Results section. Mention the implications of the findings and any limitations, and state possible implications for future research. Other relevant studies should be linked to the observations.

Conclusion

Conclusions must be linked to the aims of the research and must be supported by the data. Any new hypotheses may be stated, but must be highlighted as new. Authors are free to include recommendations based on their work.



In shorter manuscripts, such as those intended to be Technical Notes or Case Reports, the Results and Discussion sections should be combined.

Acknowledgments

The Acknowledgements section immediately precedes the Reference list. Acknowledgment should conform to the Uniform Requirements for Biomedical Journals which states:

List all contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship, such as a person who provided purely technical help, writing assistance, or a department chair who provided only general support. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged. Groups of persons who have contributed materially to the paper but whose contributions do not justify authorship may be listed under a heading such as “clinical investigators” or “participating investigators,” and their function or contribution should be described, for example, “served as scientific advisors,” “critically reviewed the study proposal,” “collected data,” or “provided and cared for study patients.” Because readers may infer their endorsement of the data and conclusions, all persons must have given written permission to be acknowledged.

References

The heading of the reference list should be 'References,' and it should contain only published or in-press references cited by number (s) in the text. The References header should be bolded. Published abstracts, printed manufacturer's protocols or instructions, and World Wide Web (WWW) site URLs may be validly cited as references. However, when citing the WWW as a reference, mention the date and time of accessing the website.

Personal communications and submitted manuscripts are not valid references. Personal communications should be cited in the text, in parentheses, at the appropriate location.

Number references consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text. Identify references in tables, and legends by Arabic numerals. References cited only in tables or legends should be numbered in accordance with a sequence established by the first identification in the text of the particular table or figure.

Text: Indicate references by number(s) in square brackets in line with the text. The actual authors can be referred to, but the reference number(s) must always be given.

Example: '... as demonstrated [3,6]. Barnaby and Jones [8] obtained a different result ...'

List: Within the reference list, number the references 1., 2.,

3., etc., in the order in which they appear in the text.

Reference Style

References should be in the Vancouver style. Further details of Vancouver style of references can be found at the following website:

<http://openjournals.net/files/Ref/VANCOUVER%20Reference%20guide.pdf> .

Examples of correct forms of references are given below.

Journal article

Surname Initial(s). Title of article. Journal title/or title abbreviation. Year;volume(issue);page(s). DOI - if available

Kwan I, Mapstone J. Visibility aids for pedestrians and cyclists: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *Accid Anal Prev*. 2004;36(3):305-12. DOI: 10.1016/S0001-4575(03)00008-3.

Kwan I, Mapstone J. Visibility aids for pedestrians and cyclists: a systematic review of randomised controlled trials. *Accid Anal Prev* [Internet]. 2004 [cited 2004 Mar 30];36(3):305-12. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/00014575>

Conference paper

Unpublished paper:

Surname Initial(s). Paper title. Paper presented at Name of conference; Date; Place.

Published paper:

Surname author Initial(s). Paper title. In: Surname editor Initial(s), editor(s). Conference title. Place of publication: Publisher; Year. page(s).

Nørvåg K. Space-Efficient Support for Temporal Text Indexing in a Document Archive Context. In: Koch T, Sølvberg I, editors. *Research and Advanced Technology for Digital Libraries*. 7th European Conference, ECDL; 2003 Aug 17-22; Trondheim, Norway. Berlin: Springer; 2003. p. 511-22.

Book

Surname Initial(s). Book title. Edition - if available. Place of publication: Publisher; Year.

Dybvig DD, Dybvig M. *Det tenkende mennesket. Filosofi- og vitenskapshistorie med vitenskapsteori*. 2nd ed. Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag; 2003.

Bick J. *101 Thing You Need to Know about Internet Law*



[Internet]. New York: Three Rivers Press; 2000 [cited 2004 Mar 30]. Available from: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ntnu/>

Anthology (book with articles)

An anthology is a book with one editor, but where the chapters are written by several different authors.

Surname author Initial(s). Chapter title. In: Surname editor Initial(s), editor(s). Book title. Place of publication: Publisher; Year. page(s).

Beizer JL, Timiras ML. Pharmacology and drug management in the elderly. In: Timiras PS, editor. Physiological basis of aging and geriatrics. 2nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press; 1994. p. 279-84.

Fermann G, editor. International politics of climate change: key issues and critical actors. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press; 1997.

Newspapers and Magazines

Surname Initial(s). Article title. Newspaper title. Date:page. Ringen S. La ikke Erna Solberg rasere det lokale folkestyre. Aftenposten. 2004 March 25:10.

Grosh A, Graff J. A strike at Europe's heart. Time Magazine. 2004 March 22:22.

Dissertation and Master thesis

Surname Initial(s). Title [type of publication]. Place: Publisher; Year.

Hasund IK. The discourse markers like in English and liksom in Norwegian teenage language: a corpus-based, cross-linguistic study [dissertation]. Bergen: Universitetet i Bergen; 2003.

Public information

Author/editor. Title. Place: Publisher; Year. Title of report series.

Arbeids- og administrasjonsdepartementet. Arbeidslivsutvalget. Et arbeidsliv for trygghet, inkludering og vekst. Oslo: Statens forvaltningstjeneste; 2004. NOU 2004:5.

Web page

Author. Title [Internet]. Place: Publisher; Date of publication [date updated; cited date]. Available from: <http://...>

Unpublished Article

In press

Kwan I, Lillywhite HD, Donald JA. Pulmonary blood flow

regulation aquatic snake. Science. In press.

Examples: Reference list

1. Kwan I, Mapstone J. Visibility aids for pedestrians and cyclists: a systematic review of randomized controlled trials. *Accid Anal Prev.* 2004;36(3):305-12. DOI: 10.1016/S0001-4575(03)00008-3
2. Dybvig DD, Dybvig M. Det tenkende mennesket. Filosofi- og vitenskapshistorie med vitenskapsteori. 2nd ed. Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag; 2003.
3. Beizer JL, Timiras ML. Pharmacology and drug management in the elderly. In: Timiras PS, editor. Physiological basis of aging and geriatrics. 2nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press; 1994. p. 279-84.
4. Fermann G, editor. International politics of climate change: key issues and critical actors. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press; 1997.

Additional Information

Tables

- Tables must have a title and be ordered consecutively according to their citations in the text. Columns must contain a heading and explanations may only be placed in footnotes.
- Non-standard abbreviations must be clarified in footnotes and the following symbols must be used in this sequence: *, †, ‡, §, **, ††, ‡‡, §§
- Bar graphs and pie charts should not be used unless absolutely necessary.

Legends for Tables

The AJFSFM has a slightly modified pattern of legends for tables and figures. Table legends should follow the pattern: [Table 2- Average height and weight of patient....."]. In-text: [Table-2 indicates the average height and....."].

Figures/Illustrations

Figures must be submitted in a neutral data format (Encapsulated PostScript (EPS), Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) or Portable Network Graphics (PNG)) with a resolution of 300 dpi. Do not use Power Point, Harvard Graphics, or PC Paint and do not import illustrations into Microsoft Word. Scanned figures must have a resolution of 300 dpi (halftone) or 600 to 1200 dpi (line drawings) relative to the reproduction size.

Figures should be numbered consecutively (in Arabic



numerals) in the order in they are cited in the text. If a figure has been previously published, acknowledge the original source and submit written permission from the copyright holder to reproduce previously published material. Please contact the Editor-in-Chief if any changes are made to figures after submission.

Legends for Illustrations

Legends must be submitted as a separate file, double-spaced, and numbered according to the illustrations, e.g., [Figure 1- Effect of temperature on DNA concentration]. In-text: [Figure-1 shows the effect of]. Symbols, arrows, numbers or letters used must be clearly identified and explained in the legend. The internal scale and method of staining in photomicrographs must be explained.

Units of Measurement

Measurements of volume, height, length, and weight must be reported in metric units or their decimal multiples. Temperatures must be represented in degrees Celsius. Blood pressures must be represented in millimeters of mercury. The International System of Units (SI) must be used to report all hematologic and clinical chemistry measurements. Non-metric units are only permitted if commonly used in a specialist field.

Abbreviations and Symbols

Terms and nomenclature must adhere to standards and lists used by appropriate international committees or organizations (the International Anatomical Nomenclature Committee, I.U.P.A.C., I.U.B., the Enzyme Commission, the Committee on International Standardization of Gene Nomenclature (ISGN). The full term for an abbreviation must precede its first use in the text. Standard units of measurement may be abbreviated e.g., Liter(s) L, Micro μ etc.

Electronic submission of Manuscripts

Manuscripts can be sent by e-mail or submitted electronically via the AJFSFM website: <http://journals.nauss.edu.sa/index.php/AJFSFM/about/submissions#online>. Submissions by first registering to the website and then submitting your manuscript by signing in using your username and password. Upon acceptance of the manuscript for publication, authors are required to provide the original copy of the assignment of copyright dully signed by all authors.

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Possible duplicate publication issues, or financial or other factors that may cause conflicts of interest, should be stated in the cover letter along with any other information the EIC may need in making a decision in such cases. Permission to include sensitive personal information about identifiable persons, or to name persons for their contributions must be included.

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Submission checklist

You can use this list to carry out a final check of your submission before you send it to the journal for review. Please check the relevant section in the AJFSFM Authors Guidelines for more details.

Ensure that the following items are present before uploading your manuscript:

- Title page along with required information
- One author has been designated as the corresponding author with contact details (E-mail and full postal address).
- Key words
- All figures (include relevant captions)
- All tables (including titles, description, footnotes)
- Ensure all figure and table citations in the text match the files provided

Supplemental files (where applicable)

- Manuscript has been "spell and grammar" checked
- All references mentioned in the Reference List are cited in the text, and vice versa
- Permission has been obtained for use of copyrighted material from other sources (including the Internet)
- Relevant declarations of interest have been made
- Journal policies, detailed in Author Guidelines, have been reviewed

Policies of the Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences & Forensic Medicine

The Arab Journal of Forensic sciences and Forensic



Medicine (AJFSFM) strictly follows the publication policies of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) on Ethical Standards, Confidentiality, Conflicts of Interest.

Ethical Standards

When human subjects are involved in experimentation, indicate whether the procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional or regional) and / or with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 1983. Do not disclose a patient's personal information at all, especially in illustrative material. Every effort must be made to protect the anonymity of patients or victims and their families.

Authors should include a statement in the manuscript that informed consent was obtained for experimentation with human subjects. The privacy rights of human subjects must always be observed. When reporting experiments on animals, indicate whether the institution's policy on the care and use of laboratory animals was followed. The Arab Journal of Forensic Sciences and Forensic Medicine (AJFSFM) is committed to following and upholding the highest standards of research and publication ethics, international guidelines, procedures, and policies [such as outlined by the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE), and Office of Research Integrity (ORI)] when dealing with any case of suspected ethical misconduct. If such a case arises, the Journal may share relevant information with necessary third parties (for example, authors' institutes). All information is treated in a strict confidential, factual, and non-judgmental manner. The AJFSFM will also retain the right to pursue any issues of ethical misconduct even after rejection or withdrawal of a manuscript from the Journal.

Confidentiality (adapted from the ICMJE Statement on Confidentiality)

Manuscripts should be reviewed with due respect for authors' confidentiality. In submitting their manuscripts for review, authors entrust editors with the results of their scientific labor and creative effort, upon which their reputation and career may depend. Authors' rights may be violated by disclosure or by revelation of the confidential details of the review of their manuscript.

Reviewers also have rights to confidentiality, which must be respected by the editor. Confidentiality may have to be breached if there are allegations of fraud or dishonesty but otherwise must be honored.

The editor should not disclose information about manuscripts, including their receipt, their content, their status in the review process, their criticism by reviewers, or their ultimate fate. Such

information should be provided only to authors themselves and reviewers.

The editor's makes clear to reviewers that manuscripts sent for review are privileged communications and are the private property of the authors. Therefore, reviewers and other people involved in the editorial process should respect the authors' rights by not publicly discussing the authors' work or appropriating their ideas before the manuscript is published. Reviewers are not allowed to make copies of the manuscript for their files and are prohibited from sharing it with others, except with the permission of the editor. Reviewers' identities are confidential, and will not be revealed to authors or to others. Reviewers' comments may be shared with other reviewers of the same manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest (adapted from the ICMJE Statement on Conflict of Interest)

A conflict of interest for a given manuscript exists when a participant in the peer-review and publication process – author, reviewer or Editor – has ties to activities that could inappropriately influence his/her judgment, whether or not judgment is in fact affected. Financial relationships with industry (such as employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria or expert testimony), either directly or through immediate family, are generally considered the most important conflicts of interest. However, conflicts can occur for other reasons, such as personal relationships, academic or research competition, and intellectual passion.

Public trust in the peer-review process and the credibility of published work depend in part on how well conflict of interest is handled during writing, peer-review and editorial decision making. Bias can often be identified and eliminated by careful attention to the scientific methods and conclusions of the work. Financial relationships and their effects are less easily detected than other types of conflicts of interest. Participants in peer-review should disclose their conflicting interests, and the information should be made available so that others can judge their effects for themselves.

Authors are responsible for recognizing and disclosing financial or other conflicts of interest that might bias their work when they submit a manuscript or letter. They should acknowledge in the manuscript all financial support for the work and other financial or personal connections to the work.

Submission of manuscripts or commentary primarily for the purpose of bolstering an author's position as an expert witness in legal proceedings is not acceptable.

Reviewers should disclose to the editor any conflicts of interest that could bias their opinions of the manuscript, and they should disqualify themselves from specific manuscripts if they believe it



to be appropriate. The editor must be made aware of conflicts of interest to interpret the reviews and judge whether the reviewer should be disqualified. Reviewers must not use knowledge of the work gained during the review process, before publication of the work, to further their own interests.

The editor should have no personal financial involvement in any of the issues that he/she may be called upon to judge. Published manuscripts and letters should include a description of all financial support and any conflict of interest that, in the editor's judgment, readers should know about.

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