

PROBLEMS of infectious and parasitic diseases

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Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement

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I. PUBLISHING ETHICS

Introduction

As a scientific journal PROBLEMS of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (PIPD) expects that all parties involved in the publishing process abide by high standards of ethics. To ensure that PIPD requires authors to carefully consider its Policy on Ethics and Malpractice.

Research Integrity

PROBLEMS of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases follows the [COPE Guidelines on Code of Conduct and Best Practices](#) and in line with them has come up with a policy on accepting and evaluating scientific content for publication. Therefore, articles received are expected to be in line with research core principles:

- honesty in all aspects of research;
- scrupulous care, thoroughness and excellence in research practice;
- transparency and open communication;
- care and respect for all participants in and subjects of research.
- accountability both for one's own research integrity and that of others when behaviour falls short of our standards.

On its part, to ensure publication's high ethical values, PIPD strives to follow [COPE's Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](#).

Editorial Process:

The PIPD is committed to editorial independence and encourages diversity and inclusion.

All materials, presented for publication, undergo strict reviewing process, which starts with the general overview of the material by a selected Editor from the Editorial Board. After being checked for compliance with the scope of the journal and scientific quality the material is selected for blind review.

Requirements to Authors:

Content Originality:

By submitting to the journal, authors confirm that their work is original, it's not published and it's not under review with different publisher. Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal concurrently constitutes unethical behaviour and is unacceptable.

Therefore, PROBLEMS of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases advises authors to stick to the accepted rules and avoid self-plagiatism by properly citing and referencing previous works on which current research is based on.

Secondary publications are possible as long as the material is disseminating important information intended to reach the widest possible audience. For the purpose agreement from the Editor-in-chief must be obtained. An approval from the editor of the journal where the primary publication was made is also required.

Reporting requirements:

It is expected of the materials to include all necessary details that would allow for the work to be replicated elsewhere. Research materials should provide evidence of the work performed and include objective discussion on the findings' significance. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behaviour and are unacceptable.

The same requirement for objectivity and accuracy applies to review materials as well.

All purposefully inaccurate, fraudulent or uninformed statements will prove obstacle to the publishing of the material.

Originality and Acknowledgement of Sources:

The materials are to contain clearly defined and well-formed References section, listing the sources cited in the material. Authors should cite publications that have influenced the reported work and that give the work appropriate context within the larger scholarly record. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, must not be used or reported without explicit, written permission from the source.

All use of work of others should be properly cited and referenced. The following are classified as plagiarism or fraudulent practice, and will not be condoned:

- use of the work of others without proper citation or attribution;
- use of images without permission or attribution, according to the respective licence (except for Public Domain materials);
- copying, paraphrasing or transforming large parts of another material;
- claiming results of others' research;
- malicious data manipulation and data invention;

Authors are expected to avoid text recycling of large parts of the material.

Possible sanctions if any of the listed above cases come up:

- the material will not be published until the issues are cleared;
- the material will be rejected
- if already published, and depending on the type and severity of the malpractice, the material could be retracted

Authorship of the paper:

Following the recommendations by the [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors \(ICMJE\)](#), the PIPD considers 4 criteria for authorship:

1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
3. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Therefore, authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made substantial contributions should be listed as co-authors.

Where there are others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the paper (e.g. language editing or medical writing), they should be recognised in the acknowledgements section.

The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors and no inappropriate co-authors are included on the paper, and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication.

Authors are expected to consider carefully the list and order of authors before submitting their manuscript and provide the definitive list of authors at the time of the original submission. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Editor consider (at their discretion) the addition, deletion or rearrangement of authors after the manuscript has been submitted and the author must clearly flag any such request to the Editor. All authors must agree with any such addition, removal or rearrangement.

Authors take collective responsibility for the work. Each individual author is accountable for ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Affiliations:

Any article affiliations should represent the institution(s) at which the research presented was conducted and/or supported and/or approved. For non-research content, any affiliations should represent the institution(s) with which each author is currently affiliated.

Copyrights:

Upon acceptance of an article, authors will be asked to complete a '[License Agreement](#)'. As an author you (or your employer or institution) retain full rights to reuse your work.

Statement of competing interest:

All authors must disclose any financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could inappropriately influence (bias) their work by signing a [Statement of competing interest](#). Examples of potential conflicts of interest include employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications/registrations, and grants or other funding.

Use of Human and Animal Subjects:

If the work involves chemicals, procedures or equipment that have any unusual hazards inherent in their use, the author must clearly identify these in the manuscript.

If the work involves the use of animal or human subjects, the author should ensure that the manuscript contains a [statement](#) that all procedures were performed in compliance with relevant laws and institutional guidelines and that the appropriate institutional committee(s) have approved them. 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.

For human subjects, the author should ensure that the work described has been carried out in accordance with [The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association \(Declaration of Helsinki\) for experiments involving humans](#).

All animal experiments should comply with [the ARRIVE guidelines](#) and should be carried out in accordance with the [EU Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes](#).

Patient Consent:

Appropriate consents, permissions and releases must be obtained where authors wish to include case details or other personal information or images of patients and any other individuals in order to comply with all applicable laws and regulations concerning the privacy and/or security of personal information (e.g. the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) \(EU\) 2016/679](#) and member state implementing legislation).

It is the responsibility of the author to ensure that:

- Each individual, or the individual's legal guardian or other person with legal authority to act on the individual's behalf who appears in any video, recording, photograph, image, illustration or case report (or in any other identifiable form) is made aware in advance of the fact that such photographs are being taken or such video, recording, photograph, image, illustration or report is being made, and of all the purposes for which they might be used, including disclosure to PIPD and use by PIPD or its licensees in any work or product. That individual, legal guardian or person with legal authority must give his/her explicit written consent. If such consent is made subject to any conditions (for example, adopting measures to prevent personal identification of the person concerned), PIPD must

be made aware in writing of all such conditions. Written consents must be retained by the author and copies of the consents or evidence that such consents have been obtained must be provided to PIPD on request

- The form of written consent complies with each requirement of all applicable Data Protection and Privacy Laws. Particular care should be taken with obtaining consent where children are concerned (in particular where a child has special needs or learning disabilities), where an individual's head or face appears, or where reference is made to an individual's name or other personal details.
- In the case of a child, if parents or guardians disagree on the use of the images of that child, then consent should be deemed not to have been given and those images should not be used. It is also important to ensure that only images of children in suitable dress are used to reduce the risk of images being used inappropriately.
- Even if consent has been obtained, care must be taken to ensure that the portrayal and captioning of the individual concerned are respectful and could not be seen as denigrating that individual.
- Patients' and research subjects' names, initials, hospital or social security numbers, dates of birth or other personal or identifying information should not be used.
- Images of patients or research subjects should not be used unless the information is essential for scientific purposes and explicit permission has been given as part of the consent. Even where consent has been given, identifying details should be omitted if they are not essential.
- If identifying characteristics are altered to protect anonymity, authors should provide assurances that such alterations do not distort scientific meaning.
- Formal consents are not required for the use of entirely anonymised images from which the individual cannot be identified- for example, xrays, ultrasound images, pathology slides or laparoscopic images, provided that these do not contain any identifying marks and are not accompanied by text that might identify the individual concerned.
- If consent has not been obtained, it is generally not sufficient to anonymise a photograph simply by using eye bars or blurring the face of the individual concerned.

Peer Review

All materials submitted for publication undergo a rigorous review process. This process begins with an initial assessment by a designated Editor from the Editorial Board, who evaluates the submission for its relevance to the journal's scope and its scientific quality. Submissions that pass this stage are then screened for similarity and potential plagiarism using the third-party service [iThenticate](#). Materials that successfully pass the similarity check are subsequently forwarded for blind peer review.

The blind review proceeds with the materials being sent to a minimum of two reviewers and as many more as deemed needed by the editor. The reviewing process could consist of a single review round, in case of needed minor correction, or multiple review rounds, after which the material is selected or rejected for publication. On every step during the review there is a

communication flow between the Editor and the Author, appointed as primary contact and as such - a representative of all the other authors (when applicable).

All major steps regarding the publication of the material, opening new review rounds, etc. are communicated to the whole authors' team.

The final acceptance or rejection of a material is decided by the Editorial team and is strictly based on reviewers' feedback, compliance with journal's scope and the overall material quality and scientific value.

Requirements for Peer-reviewers:

PIPD encourages reviewers to provide constructive, courteous, and clear comments to authors and thus ensure the research and publication requirements are met.

Reviews must be prepared solely by the invited reviewer and reflect their independent, expert assessment of the manuscript.

The use of AI-generated or AI-assisted review text is not permitted, as it raises concerns about accuracy, accountability, and confidentiality.

Manuscripts under review are confidential documents, and sharing them—whether in full or in part—with third parties, including AI tools or platforms, constitutes a breach of reviewer obligations and may violate copyright.

By accepting a review invitation, reviewers agree to uphold these standards and to ensure that all aspects of their evaluation remain secure, original, and attributable to their own scholarly judgment.

Additionally, reviewers are required to remain anonymous in their reports. PIPD does not publish received reviews unless such a necessity in particular situations arises. Reviewers retain the copyrights of their reports.

Furthermore, PIPD expects reviewers to keep the good tone when providing their remarks and comments. The journal does not have the policy to edit reviews and therefore, requires reviewers to make sure information is well articulated and understandable. In case editors find unacceptable and inappropriate content in the reviews received, they will be requested to mark such comments providing further guidance to authors.

Requirements for Editors:

Editors who make final decisions about manuscripts must have no personal, professional, or financial involvement in any of the issues they might judge and disqualify themselves from any decisions where they have a conflict of interest.

Editorial staff must not use the information gained through working with manuscripts for private gain.

Confidentiality:

All submitted papers are confidential. Editors will not disclose any information about the submitted manuscripts to parties, other than the ones involved in the publication process (Editors, Reviewers, Copywriters, Technical staff).

By accepting an article for review, reviewers are bound not to disclose any part of it to third parties.

Editors, reviewers and all other staff, with access to the system, should not use submitted papers for personal advantage or own research before the official publication of the material, at which point they are to be bound by the conditions of the respective publisher.

Handling complaints and appeals:

General procedures:

PIPD relies on the expert judgement of its editors and reviewers to raise any suspicions of breach of research and publication ethics so that only articles that meet the criteria of ethics are accepted for publication. Readers are also invited to share opinions and such concerns post-publication to ensure no compromise is made with content's reliability.

The Ethical Commission within NCIPD handles complaints and appeals as well as conflicts of interest in case such arise.

Therefore, the journal is open for post-publication discussions and corrections which will be published in its next edition as long as approved by the editorial team and after contacting original authors, peer reviewers and handling editors for additional stances. In case the above mentioned do not respond post-publication discussions are published after assessment by the Ethical Commission of the NCIPD.

If an author is found to have made an error, the journal will issue a corrigendum. If the journal is found to have made an error, it will issue an erratum. When amendments to the original articles are considered appropriate, the journal makes a remark with the name of the researcher pointing out the necessity for corrections.

Retraction Policy:

Retractions are usually reserved for articles that are so seriously flawed that their findings or conclusions should not be relied upon, or that contain substantial plagiarism or life-endangering content.

More precisely retraction is considered in the following cases:

- The journal has clear evidence that the findings presented in the material are unreliable, either as a result of major error (eg, miscalculation or experimental error), or as a result of fabrication (eg, of data) or falsification (eg, image manipulation)
- The material constitutes plagiarism
- The findings of research have previously been published elsewhere without proper attribution to previous sources or disclosure to the editor, permission to republish, or justification (ie, cases of redundant publication)
- The manuscript contains material or data without authorisation for use
- Copyright has been infringed or there is some other serious legal issue (eg, libel, privacy)
- The manuscript reports unethical research
- The manuscript has been published solely on the basis of a compromised or manipulated peer review process
- The author(s) failed to disclose a major competing interest (aka, conflict of interest) that, in the view of the editor, would have unduly affected interpretations of the work or recommendations by editors and peer reviewers.

In case retraction is considered appropriate, a retraction notice is published by the journal covering the reasons and basis for the retraction to enable readers to understand why the article is unreliable and who is retracting it. Additional information on how the matter came to the journal's attention will also be provided in line with [COPE's Retraction Guidelines](#).

Under the following circumstances, **removing** an article may be considered:

- it is a clearly defamatory article.
- it infringes others' legal rights.
- the article is (expected to be) the subject of a court order.
- it contains medical error(s) that, if followed by a researcher or practitioner, could lead to significant physical or mental harm to patients or test subjects.
- it contains a photograph in which a particular individual can be identified, or includes (personal) data that would lead to an individual being easily identified, particularly where the individual has not provided an appropriate consent or is legally incapable of providing such consent.
- In some cases quick action on an **emergency** basis is important in protecting the privacy of an individual or in avoiding medical harm.

Criteria for emergency takedown:

- Data/identity protection: Allegation that the online publication of an article contains a photograph in which a particular individual can be identified, or that an article includes the name or other personal identifying information of an individual, or other data that would otherwise lead to an individual being easily identified, particularly where the

individual has not provided an appropriate consent or is legally incapable of providing such consent for such personal information to be publicly disclosed.

- Dosage/medical error: Allegation that the contents of an article contain a medical error that, if followed by a researcher or practitioner, could lead to significant physical or mental harm to patients or test subjects, particularly where medical researchers or practitioners might not be aware that the error is inconsistent with current practice.

Raising concerns:

Anyone who believes that research published by PIPD has not been carried out in line with these principles should raise their concerns with the relevant editor, or email pipd@ncipd.org

II. Ethical Business Practices

Open Access and Fees

PROBLEMS of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases is an open access journal since 2021-01-01 with all content available under BB-CY 4.0 license.

Users are allowed to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of the articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author, in accordance with the BOAI definition of open access and the BB-CY 4.0 license.

The materials selected for publication in PROBLEMS of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases are judged solely on their merits.

No fees are charged to the authors or readers of the journal.

The journal is entirely financed by the Bulgarian Ministry of Health.

On rare occasions, the journal may include a section promoting a product or a company, but this is not a common practice, it is always located on a separate page from the rest of the content at the beginning or near the end of the publication and never among the scientific content. The decision for such content is taken after a complex assessment of the promoted product carried out by the experts in NCIPD. Advertisements are never related in any way to editorial decision making and are kept separate from the published content.

Ownership and Management

PIPD is published by National Centre of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases in English, with periodicity of three issues annually, in a print and digital version.

The National Centre of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases (NCIPD) - Sofia, Bulgaria is a national institution with a status of scientific organisation under the Bulgarian Ministry of Health.

NCIPD hosts all National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) for various bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections, accredited by the Bulgarian Accreditation Service (BAS) in 2003 under the European requirements of standard BS EN ISO 17025 for quality of work.

Since 2007, NCIPD has been designated as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Center of the United Nations on epidemiological surveillance of communicable diseases and antibiotic resistance with the task of responding in these areas and training personnel for Southeast European and Asian countries former USSR.

In 2007 NCIPD was designated by the European Center for Disease Control (ECDC) in Stockholm as the leading, competent national organization, etc. "National competent body" in the field of infectious and parasitic diseases.

NCIPD is the oldest scientific and practical institute in the field of healthcare in Bulgaria. Established in 1881, NCIPD launched the modern struggle against contagious and parasitic diseases in the country based on the latest achievements of world science.

The main activities of NCIPD include:

- Scientific research;
- Training of students and mainly graduate and doctoral students in the line of SDO;
- Reference laboratory diagnosis and expertise;
- Organizational and methodical assistance to Regional Health Inspectorates (RHIs) and all other healthcare facilities in the country and publishing activities in the field of infectious diseases;
- Production of certain biological preparations for diagnostics, therapy and immuno-prophylaxis.

Governing body

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Privacy Statement

PROBLEMS of Infectious and Parasitic Diseases inevitably collects certain personal data directly related to the ability to communicate with the participants in the process of scientific publishing and metadata generated by the systems.

This may include, but is not limited to:

- First, Middle and Last names
- email address, phone numbers, geographical and IP addresses
- Institutional affiliations and positions
- Aliases' in other published materials, indexing engines etc.

Parts of the data, related to the conventions of scientific publishing, such as names, affiliations and positions, are published and publically accessible only in context of related materials.

Within the system the information is secured with utmost care. Personal data, other than stated above, is not revealed to third parties without prior written consent from the data owner or within the scope of lawful request from entitled entity.

The use of third party services is limited to the functional minimum, while preserving the expected functionality of the systems.

By submitting material or creating a registration within the system user agrees to provide requested personal information freely, to be used for the stated above purposes.

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