

PMSRJ

PAKISTAN MEDICAL STUDENTS RESEARCH JOURNAL

THE EDITORIAL POLICY

Overview

This text highlights the mission, objectives, and editorial policy of PMSRJ regarding the publication process by adhering to the guidelines by COPE (Committee in Publication Ethics) and ICMJE (International Committee of Medical Journals Editors). Each component of the editorial policy is explained in the next sections.

A) The mission of the PMSRJ

To provide a platform for medical students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) to publish scientific material to help them in their practice, teaching and learning, and career development

B) Objectives of PMSRJ

- a) To publish clinical, epidemiological, public health, educational, translational, and allied sciences research to enable the scientists, clinicians, and researchers to learn about developments and innovations in these disciplines
- b) To publish high quality descriptive and experimental research, review articles, editorials, and case reports enhancing the understanding of the scientific community regarding clinical practice and education
- c) To provide a platform for medical students in promoting their career development through publishing quality research

C) Editorial policy

1- Open access

PMSRJ is an Open access scholarly literature source that is free of charge and often carries less restrictive copyright and licensing barriers than traditionally published works, for both the users and the authors. However, it complies with well-established peer review processes and tries to maintain high publishing standards.

2- Peer review process

The review process of PMRJS is following a "triage approach". Upon submission of a manuscript, either online or physical, the document undergoes a preliminary open (un-blinded) review in the office of the chief editor. The document is either accepted for further review, sent for revision back to the authors, or rejected at

that time. Further review of PMSRJ is following a blinded approach, where the article is sent to 2 reviewers, local and international. During this process, all the relevant information about the authors and reviewers is kept confidential. However, we encourage to share reviewers' comments with co-reviewers of the same paper in a blinded manner, so reviewers can learn from each other in the review process. We also encourage the readers to send us the post-publication reviews about research work in the form of letters to the editors, which are then published and shared with the authors of relevant articles. The editorial board has the authority to retract an article if a serious violation of credibility or quality of research is found after the article is published.

The journal is under no obligation to send submitted manuscripts for review, and under no obligation to follow reviewer recommendations, favorable or negative at all times. The editor of a journal is ultimately responsible for the selection of all its content, and editorial decisions may be taken by issues unrelated to the quality of a manuscript, such as suitability for the journal. An editor can reject any article at any time before publication, including after acceptance if concerns arise about the integrity of the work.

3- Authorship

According to the ICMJE criteria, authorship is based on 4 criteria; (1) conceptualization and designing, (2) AND, data collection, (3) AND, writing and critical review, (4) AND, taking responsibility for the authenticity and integrity of all the research process. All those designated as authors should meet all these 4 criteria. The co-authors should declare their roles and contributions in the research process explicitly. Those who do not meet all 4 criteria should be ACKNOWLEDGED only. If agreement cannot be reached about who qualifies for authorship, the institution(s) where the work was performed, not the journal editor, should be asked to investigate. If authors request removal, addition, or change in the sequence of an author after manuscript submission or publication, journal editors should seek an explanation and signed statement of agreement for the requested change from all listed authors and from the author to be removed or added. The corresponding author is the one individual who takes primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the manuscript submission, peer review, and publication process. The corresponding author typically ensures that all the journal's administrative requirements, such as providing details of authorship, ethics committee approval, clinical trial registration documentation, and disclosures of relationships and activities, are properly completed and reported.

4- Submission of manuscript

The manuscript should be submitted through the journal website which is using the Online Journal System (OJS) along with the Institution research and ethics board (IREB) certificate. The article should have the following format:

4.1: The abstract should be structured with a word count of not more than 250 words.

4.2: The fonts should be Calibri, with size 12, and spacing of 1.5, with justified margins in MS office format.

4.3: The whole document should not be more than 3000 words (excluding references and appendices).

4.4: The number of figures and tables should not exceed 5 in the whole document.

4.5: The pictures and tables should be black and white.

4.6: Copied pictures and tables from other sources will not be entertained unless written approval from the original researcher and publisher is provided

5- Institutional research and Ethics board (IREB) certificate

Under no circumstances, an article will be accepted if approval from the relevant ethical board/committee is not taken before the start of the research. The board/committee should assess the proposal of research in both ethical and technical aspects before giving a certificate of approval.

6- Conflict of interest

To ensure transparency in the research conduction, writing, and publication, the authors, peer reviewers, and editors have to declare conflicts of interest regarding financial aspects, academic competitions, and relationships during writing, reviewing, and publishing the manuscripts. Details of sponsors along with their roles and access to data should be clearly stated.

7- Confidentiality

The editorial board in no way should publicize the work of a researcher in any form unless it is published. They should not publicize the comments and critiques given by reviewers. Similarly, the reviewers are bound to keep the confidentiality of the work of researchers during and after the review. The work of researchers and the critique should never be discussed or exemplified in forums. The confidentiality of the researchers should be maintained in every possible way when the documents are sent for review. However, our review process is open (non-blinded) in the first phase, as per the policy of the journal. In this case, the policy is displayed on the journal's website for the researchers. Reviewers must not retain the manuscript for their personal use and should destroy paper copies of manuscripts and delete electronic copies after submitting their reviews. If a manuscript is rejected, it should be deleted from the editorial system. If an article is published, the manuscript along with its reviews and other relevant documents should be retained for 3 years and then deleted. The only situation where confidentiality needs to be breached is when a situation of fraud or misconduct is found during the review process or after publication. Still, the authors and sometimes the reviewers, have to be notified.

8- Correction and retraction of articles

The guidelines for correction and retraction of articles are as follows:

8.1: A specific page is allocated in the journal (both electronic and printed) that will be used for news related to corrections in articles published in previous journals.

8.2: The editor should also post a new article version in the journal with details of the changes from the original version and the date(s) on which the changes were made.

8.3: Previous electronic versions will prominently note that there are more recent versions of the article (that will be placed at the end of the abstract). Similarly, the more recent version should be cited by the authors or others.

8.4: If the error is judged to be unintentional, and the underlying science appears valid, and the changed version of the paper survives further review and editorial scrutiny, then retraction with the republication of the changed paper, with an explanation, allows full correction of that research paper.

8.5: If a serious violation of credibility or quality of a research paper is found after the publication, the article has to be retracted after approval of at least 3 members of the editorial board in consultation with the chief editor. The whole process will follow the guidelines presented by Committee on publication ethics (COPE).

8.6: The retracted article should be notified on the website and the word "retracted" should be mentioned along with the title of the article.

9- Correspondence

Correspondence for submitting an article in PMSRJ will be through a corresponding author. The duties of a corresponding author have already been presented in a previous section. Correspondence regarding debating an article is given high value and a separate page for letters to the editors has been allocated. Derogatory and demeaning letters are screened and letters that promote debates and critique are encouraged to be published. However, correspondence about the articles published in the last 1 year will be included only.

10-The fee submission process

The editorial board has fixed a fee of 4000/- Rs (Pakistani), for local authors and 100 \$ (US) for international authors. The fee should be submitted as bank draft/online payment through the account (for more information visit/contact Office of Managing Editor, PMSRJ)

For international authors, the amount of 100 US dollars will be accepted after both internal and external review. Authors are advised to submit the fee after the whole process of review is completed and the article is accepted for publication.

11- Roles of the editorial board, editors, and members

The editorial board of PMSRJ is following the Higher Education Commission (HEC) policy for research journals. The roles of the editorial board for PMSRJ are mentioned below:

11.1: The roles of the Editorial Board are:

11.1.1: To offer expertise in their specialist area

11.1.2: To review submitted manuscripts

11.1.3: To advise on journal policy and scope

11.1.4: To work with the Editor to ensure the ongoing development of the journal

11.1.5: To identify topics for special issues of the journal or recommend a Conference that would promote the journal, which they might also help to organize and/or guest edit

11.1.6: To attract new and established authors and articles

11.1.7: To submit some of their work for consideration, ensuring that they adhere to Conflict of Interest rules and stating their relationship to the journal. This is very important as the journal cannot be seen to publish only papers from members of the Editorial Board.

11.1.8: Editorial Board must have a regular communication forum with other boards of similar nature, either face to face in person (depending on their country of origin, funding availability, etc.) or as more journals are doing today, communicating by teleconference, Skype, or other web platforms.

11.2: The Patron:

The Patron is usually the Dean of the institute and is overall in charge of the journal, who needs to be kept informed of the decisions taken by the editorial board. The patron is the final authority to approve the decisions and policies of the editorial board.

11.3: The Chief/Associate/Assistant Editors:

11.3.1: The criteria for selection of Chief/Associate/Assistant Editors are:

- i. Expertise and experience in the specialist field related to the journal
- ii. Publication record of articles and /or books (usually in / related to the specialist field)
- iii. Being a reviewer for an international peer-reviewed journal
- iv. Senior research position with equivalent experience in research and scholarship
- v. Enthusiasm to undertake the Editor role
- vi. Preferably a diploma, master or doctoral degree in Education and Research

It is not necessary to fulfill all the criteria to become a chief editor.

11.3.2: The roles of Chief Editor are:

- i. The key role of a journal`s chief editor is to promote scholarship in the specialist field associated with the journal, whilst also promoting the journal as the best journal to publish in. For any journal, the editor will need to encourage new and established authors to submit articles and set up a reliable panel of expert reviewers. Editors are

also responsible for offering feedback to reviewers when required and ensure that any feedback to authors is constructive.

- ii. An editor should also familiarize him/herself with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) 'Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors.
- iii. Depending on how the journal is managed and how it is structured, an Editor may have to make all the decisions regarding which articles to accept or reject for publication.

11.3.3: Managing editor:

The roles of managing editor are:

- i. To help the chief editors to achieve the above-mentioned goals
- ii. To communicate with the authors, reviewers, publishers, and other agencies for the smooth running of the journal
- iii. To regularly evaluate the research work
- iv. To communicate with funding and regulating agencies (HEC and others) for grants and accreditations.

11.3.4: Executive editor:

The roles of the executive editor are:

- i. To evaluate the research articles presented for publication
- ii. To help the editorial board in policymaking
- iii. To help the editorial board in smooth publishing
- iv. To communicate with reviewers and collaborate with external agencies for relevant purposes

11.3.5: Section editors:

Section editors are allotted different responsibilities. Some of these are mentioned below:

- i. Bibliography
- ii. Proof-reading
- iii. Academic writing reviewing, grammar, and spell checking
- iv. Dissemination of articles for review
- v. Contact with publishers under the supervision of senior editorial team
- vi. Training of future reviewers, young members, and other faculty members
- vii. others

11.3.5: Editorial advisory board:

Editorial advisory board members consist of national and international senior academicians, researchers, clinicians, and others to help the current editorial board in designing, implementing, and evaluating policies regarding upgrading the quality of research work. These people also share best practices to help the editorial team to refine their research work.

12- Policy regarding recruitment and continuation of the editorial board

The policy for recruitment and continuation of the editorial board is based on the guidelines discussed in the previous section. The chief editor, managing editor, and executive editors /associate and assistant editors are recruited by the patron in-Chief. Members are then selected by them from amongst the faculty who have an aptitude for research, and their names are endorsed by the patron. The tenure of the editorial board is decided by the Patron after 3 years whether to continue or recruit a new team or member. The editorial advisory board members are recruited for an indefinite period by the editorial team of PMSRJ.

13- Plagiarism policy

The journal is following the plagiarism policy of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, and for this purpose, a plagiarism standing and review committee. The committee has been given the authority to review research papers and plagiarism complaints related to published work in the journal.

14- Contact information

The office of managing editor or chief editor should be contacted anytime in working hours or can be contacted through their emails for correspondence.

References:

- 1) ICMJE recommendations
- 2) COPE guidelines
- 3) SCOPUS

This document is prepared in September 2021 to be used by the editorial board, reviewers, researchers, and faculty as a guide to making them aware of policies and procedures of publishing, conducting, writing, reviewing, and evaluating the research published in PMSRJ. This document is developed by including the recommendations of ICMJE (2019) and COPE guidelines and in case of any conflict, lack of clarity, and ambiguity, the recommendations of the latest ICMJE recommendation and COPE will prevail.