

ETHICS STANDARDS OF Gaceta Sanitaria¹

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1. Preamble

Gaceta Sanitaria actively defends transparency and rigour in its relationships with its parent association (the Spanish Society of Public Health and Health Administration [SESPAS]), the publishing company that publishes the journal (Elsevier España) and its authors, reviewers and readers. That is why it has partnered with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, www.publicationethics.org) and endorses the contents of what is called the White Paper on Publication Ethics, approved by the Council of Science Editors in March 2012.

These ethical standards describe the journal policies designed to ensure an ethical and equitable treatment of all the individuals and the information involved in the publishing process. The standards have been discussed and developed in the editorial committee of Gaceta Sanitaria and have been shared with the Board of Directors at SESPAS and the publishing company. This initiative has been carried out previously by other journals (for example, the American Journal of Public Health) and Elsevier has also adopted these standards.

Gaceta Sanitaria aims to select, by means of an external peer review process, scientific information of immediate or future relevance in public health practice. In this process, only the scientific quality of the information and the usefulness of the articles will be taken into consideration, and there will be no

discrimination based on the geographic origin, professional category, academic rank or sex of the women and men who write the articles (the authors). Scientific journals are also important tools for introducing and legitimising social agenda matters, and for proposing or criticising health-related policies in order to contribute to the wellbeing of society. Gaceta Sanitaria has also joined the REWARD (REduce research Waste And Reward Diligence) campaign initiated by The Lancet, which attempts to counteract the alarming waste in scientific research by seeking efficiency, reproducibility and transfer of knowledge to practice, management and policies.

Gaceta Sanitaria feels committed to the development of democracy and human rights, to defending the health of the planet, aiding minorities and reducing social inequalities. The publishing process has to be objective, unbiased, careful and fair, because that implies keeping ethical principles in mind in decisions. Gaceta Sanitaria's reputation depends on the trust of its readers, authors, reviewers, managers, editors, public health professionals, the community, sponsors, funding agencies and healthcare authorities. This trust is reinforced by the most explicit description possible of the journal policies for ensuring equitable and ethical treatment of all the participants involved in the publishing process.

Gaceta Sanitaria ensures that the opinions and/or conclusions reflected in the articles published in it are respected, promoting scientific development and debate in the matters addressed in the journal. In doing so, it does not take on any type of responsibility derived from the authors' opinions and/or conclusions, except for that stemming from not having submitted the work to an evaluation in agreement with these ethical standards.

2. Ethical responsibilities for the Gaceta Sanitaria editors

The editors of Gaceta Sanitaria have ethical responsibilities with the authors that they plan to publish in the journal, with the men and women who evaluate manuscript submissions (the reviewers) and collaborate with the journal, with the readers, and with the scientific community in general.

Gaceta Sanitaria considers for publication manuscripts that have been prepared with the highest quality control standards in their implementation and in the data analysis. Gaceta Sanitaria also plans to help to improve the efficiency of research in public health and healthcare management, emphasising reproducibility and

¹Inspired by those of the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) (Publication Ethics Policies for Medical Journals, <http://wame.org/recommendations-on-publication-ethics-policies-for-medical-journals> accessed 01/01/2019). These ethical standards were prepared by the Gaceta Sanitaria Editorial Committee in January 2019.

²http://cseditors.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/entire_whitepaper.pdf, accessed 01/01/2019

³<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/page/editethicpol.html>, accessed 01/01/2019.

⁴<https://www.elsevier.com/about/our-business/policies/publishing-ethics>, accessed 01/01/2019.

⁵<http://rewardalliance.net/>, accessed 01/01/2019.

⁶Ética, salud y dispendio del conocimiento. Cuadernos de la Fundació Víctor Grifols i Lucas, No. 38, 2016 (https://www.fundaciogrifols.org/documentos/4662337/11652699/etica_salud_dispendio/4342d561-9663-42df-ac5c-f47d326d77ff), accessed 01/01/2019.

transference. Consequently, decisions about publishing an article have to be based exclusively on its importance, originality, clarity, relevance for public health and methodological quality.

Gaceta Sanitaria adheres to the fundamental principles of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki. Research studies involving animals or people sent to Gaceta Sanitaria must have been approved by the corresponding ethics committees and have to guarantee strict compliance with the current research standards. Authors have to declare this explicitly in their manuscripts, and the editorial committee may require a formal certification from them. If there are doubts as to whether a specific study, due to its characteristics, has to be submitted to the ruling of an ethics committee, the decision should not lie exclusively in the hands of its signatories; the ethics committee itself could be required to ratify that a ruling is unnecessary in the specific case.

Both during the decision-making process and after the decision, the editors must comply with the following as well:

1. Respect the confidentiality of the process, not revealing any details about the manuscript or its review, beyond what may be released officially by journal management.
2. Not make use of the information obtained during the process of review/decision, regardless of whether it is for personal benefit or third-party benefit, or it is to harm or discredit other individuals.
3. Declare all potential conflicts of interests, requesting that the journal director and/or the rest of the editorial team give advice when there are any doubts as to whether a specific aspect could be relevant as a conflict of interest.
4. Not allow decisions to be influenced by the origin of a manuscript, by the nationality, religious or political preferences, gender or other characteristics of its signatories, or by commercial considerations.
5. Be objective and constructive in communications with the authors, avoiding inconsiderate or challenging language, as well as comments that are slanderous or represent a personal attack.

- Conflicts of interests

The editors must not handle manuscripts whose authors work in the same centre as the editors, who are relatives or who have had previous professional relationships that might affect objectivity. In addition, the editors will not handle articles with which they have any other type of conflict of interest, an issue that journal management will carefully follow. To ensure transparency, the name of the editor in charge will be included in all the articles published in the journal.

A fundamental conflict that might affect the Gaceta Sanitaria editors is their role as authors of articles to be published in the journal. Throughout the entire publishing process of these articles, the editors that are signatories of the article cannot have access to any information about the status of the manuscript (editor in charge, reviewers assigned and their comments on the article) using the editorial management program, with the tools that the program itself has to guarantee this. If the manuscripts are accepted after their editorial and peer review, it must be explicitly indicated as a conflict of interests that one of the article signatories is part of the Gaceta Sanitaria editorial team (this should already be stated in the manuscript submitted).

3. Ethical responsibilities for Gaceta Sanitaria authors

The contributions of each of the article signatories has to be specified for all articles. Gaceta Sanitaria is committed to prevent authorship fraud with «guest» authors (individuals that do not comply with the authorship criteria but sign the study) or «ghost» authors (individuals that have been omitted from signing the study even though they fulfil the authorship criteria). Authorship represents a significant intellectual contribution to the article, which has to be backed by simultaneous participation in:

- Conceiving and designing the study, or data gathering, or analysing and interpreting the data.
- Writing the article or reviewing it critically with significant intellectual contributions.
- Approving the final version for its publication.
- Being responsible for and ensuring that all the parts comprising the manuscript have been reviewed and discussed among the authors so that the ideas are expressed with the maximum accuracy and integrity.

Gaceta Sanitaria pay special attention to ensuring that the authorship criteria are satisfied in the manuscripts having several authors (more than 6). In a manuscript with 7 or more authors, fulfilling the authorship criteria proposed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors is more difficult.

Acknowledgements service to assign credit to individuals that do not fulfil all the authorship requirements but they have helped to carry out the study or prepare the manuscript. It is also an acceptable section in which to mention individuals or organisations that have supported the study or the manuscript, with either work or funds. All individuals included in the acknowledgements must have given their permission to be indicated there.

All the authors are responsible for the accuracy of the manuscript, and one of them has to guarantee the authenticity of the research. Biased elaboration, falsification or selective communication of results constitutes a scientific fraud against which Gaceta Sanitaria is strongly committed.

The authors that wish to publish their research in Gaceta Sanitaria accept the following responsibilities:

1. Originality. Authors have to ensure that the study that they wish to publish is original. All the articles sent to Gaceta Sanitaria are scrutinised to detect plagiarism using specialised software. The authors must indicate in the presentation letter if the same study has been submitted or published previously (partially or completely) and may consequently be considered redundant or duplicated publication. The bibliographic references for such previous publications have to be cited and included. The authors are son responsible for obtaining permission to partially reproduce material (text, tables or figures) from other published studies. Such permission must be requested from both the authors involved and the publisher of the document. A study will not be considered a redundant publication if the work has been presented previously as a summary or in the framework of a published conference or as an academic thesis.

2. Compliance with standards. The authors of Gaceta Sanitaria accept the journal standards, with respect to publishing standards,

⁷<https://www.wma.net/es/policias-post/declaracion-de-helsinki-de-la-amm-principios-eticos-para-las-investigaciones-medicas-en-seres-humanos/>, accessed 01/01/2019.

⁸<http://www.icmje.org/#author>, accessed 01/01/2019.

ethical standards and the journal policy of encouraging gender equity in scientific publishing. Failure to comply with these standards in the manuscripts submitted may be sufficient cause for rejecting the article.

3. Confidentiality. The authors must respect the confidentiality of the publishing process, in both communicating with the editor and in reviewing by experts and their evaluation reports. During the publishing process, the authors must not communicate with the external reviewers in reference to the article evaluated.

4. Copyright. Gaceta Sanitaria is a completely open access publication; all the articles are immediately and permanently accessible to facilitate reading and downloading them. The Creative Commons licence present in each article defines its permitted uses. Gaceta Sanitaria articles are published under CC BYNC-ND licence, which makes it possible for others to copy and distribute the article and include it in a group endeavour (such as an anthology or doctoral thesis by compendium), as long as there is no commercial purpose, the article remains unaltered and unmodified, and the original work is properly credited and referenced.

5. Availability of data. Gaceta Sanitaria supports open access to research data and encourages authors to share the materials required for their study (for example, the databases or the code for analysis). In the author standards, the various ways of sharing this information are established. Using a public repository is recommended, although sending the information through supplementary files, or making data available to individuals requesting it are also allowed. The data and computer codes referring to the studies should be kept by the authors, because either the reviewers or the editors may request a re-analysis, and even the original database.

- Conflicts of interests.

Each of the authors must complete the conflict of interests disclosure statement of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. The editors may request that the authors expand this statement of conflicts if the editors consider it appropriate to do so.

Conflicts of interests include facts or circumstances that are capable of influencing the judgement and integrity of the authors' actions and, consequently, affect the credibility of the article. All potential conflict of interests must be declared, regardless of the fact that the individuals consider that these circumstances have not affected their judgement or integrity.

4. Ethical responsibilities for the reviewers

Review by experts (peer review) is fundamental in the process of scientific publishing. The editorial policy of Gaceta Sanitaria is to have 3 external reviewers and 1 editor assigned to each article, as a general norm; this ensures the plurality in opinions. Gaceta Sanitaria publishes an annual list of all the experts that have done some reviewing for the journal. The main responsibilities of the experts can be summarised as the following:

1. Accept the review of only manuscripts in whose subject area the expert has sufficient experience and always as long as the review can be completed within the established period.
2. Respect the confidentiality of the process and avoid revealing any details about the manuscript or its review, both while it is

being reviewed and after it has been completed, beyond what the journal itself chooses to disclose. The reviewers can, if they wish to do so, sign the reports on the articles.

3. Do not make use of the information obtained during the review process, whether it is for self-benefit or third-party benefit, or to harm or discredit others.

4. Declare all potential conflicts of interests, requesting advice from the journal if there is a doubt as to whether some specific aspect could be relevant as an interest in conflict.

5. Keep the revisions from being influenced by the origin of a manuscript, by the nationality, religious or ideological preferences, gender or other characteristics of the authors, or by commercial considerations.

6. Perform an objective, constructive review, avoiding the use of inconsiderate or challenging language, as well as slanderous comments or those that imply a personal attack.

7. Recognise that peer review constitutes, to a great extent, a reciprocal task, handling the assessment that the authors deserve in all fairness and doing so on time and in the proper way.

8. Acknowledge that supplanting the reviewer during the review process constitutes a serious breach of good scientific practices.

- Conflicts of interests

These are facts or circumstances that are capable of influencing the judgement and integrity of the reviewers' actions. There are various types of conflicts: work (authors working in the same centre where the study was performed), research (having a similar project about to be finished, or having a close collaboration or antagonism with one of the authors), economic (shares or share rights in companies, funding of studies by business entities, receiving payment for consulting, presentations or belonging to boards of directors) or moral (religious objections to abortion, sexuality or euthanasia, among other issues). If there is a conflict of interests, the individual should renounce the review of the article.

5. Responsibilities of Gaceta Sanitaria with SESPAS and the publishing company

The relationships of Gaceta Sanitaria with SESPAS and the publishing company are ruled by the document Regulation for Gaceta Sanitaria (latest modification approved by the SESPAS Assembly on 29 January 2016). Gaceta Sanitaria management is responsible for the quality and interest of the journal contents. The management is also responsible for fulfilling the policies of editorial development that SESPAS le assigns, including those concerning its business line, and Gaceta Sanitaria has to report the results of their management periodically.

Although SESPAS is the leading organisation that owns Gaceta Sanitaria, the journal management and the editorial team act independently of it and its governing bodies in matters of establishing editorial policy; that is, establishing journal contents. This does not prevent collaboration between the Gaceta Sanitaria management and editorial team and the SESPAS Assembly and Board of Directors. This is particularly true with respect to suggestions from the journal management for thematic areas for assignment of editorials and special articles; this also involves supplements on subjects that SESPAS considers a priority

⁹<http://www.icmje.org/#author>, accessed 01/01/2019.

¹⁰http://www.icmje.org/downloads/coi_disclosure.pdf, accessed 01/01/2019.

for public health and healthcare policy. Management and the editorial team report to SESPAS annually by computer means as to the management and the number of manuscripts received, accepted and published (by sections and thematic areas), and the bibliometric status of Gaceta Sanitaria. SESPAS has a manager in charge of relationships with the journal, who serves as a link between both parties.

The publishing company is responsible for areas concerning publication, which includes the editorial staff, budget, company policy and the tools for publishing management of the journal, such as the management software. The publishing company will promote including the journal in different databases and bibliographic repositories.

Gaceta Sanitaria is financed through the subscription fees of SESPAS members, institutional subscriptions in the public sector and advertising by pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical companies. The authors of the articles accepted also contribute to the financial sustainability of the journal. Supplements are funded by the congresses that publish their abstracts, and some have been sponsored economically by pharmaceutical companies or by the public sector. Each year, the funding sources of Gaceta Sanitaria and the contribution of each of them are made public. Gaceta Sanitaria is a strong advocate of transparency in its funding and is in favour of having the SESPAS revenue related to the journal lead to improving it.

6. Appealing editorial decisions

Authors that send articles to Gaceta Sanitaria have the right to appeal any decision taken by the editors. To do so, a complaint letter should be prepared, in which the reasons for needing the decision reviewed (errors or manifest bias on the part of the editors or reviewers) should be presented; the complaint should not be limited to opinions about the disagreement. At any time in the appeal process, either of the two parties can resort to arbitration of the Gaceta Sanitaria ombudsperson.

- Gaceta Sanitaria ombudsperson

Gaceta Sanitaria aims to strengthen the mechanisms that ensure transparency and good practice in the journal through the figure of the Gaceta Sanitaria ombudsperson. With this initiative, a proposal that already enjoyed a certain tradition in various media and organisations (including the scientific press) has been put into practice. The first antecedent in biomedical journals dates back to 1996, when The Lancet announced that an ombudsman was being named (according to the Oxford Dictionary: «an officer designated by a government to investigate the individual complaints with respect to public authorities»); the function of that individual was to investigate claims and complaints of the authors concerning the editorial management of their work.

Gaceta Sanitaria has expanded this coverage to all the individuals participating in the publishing process (authors, reviewers, editors, publishing management), as well as to the public and other parties affected by journal content (for example, individuals or groups that perceive unfair treatment from the pages of the publication). Anyone that wishes to can write to the ombudsperson indicating her or his complaint.

The Gaceta Sanitaria ombudsperson will have no executive power, only an advisory role. At any rate, the ombudsperson will be directly accessible, without an intermediary of the editorial team or other parties. The ombudsperson will also have available all the relevant

documentation related to each case (correspondence, reports, etc.). The functions of this person and the means of contacting him or her will be published in the journal. Reports will also be published periodically, in the editorial notes section, on the principles and results of the ombudsperson's activity, always respecting the margins of confidentiality and privacy that can affect each situation.

SESPAS will appoint the Gaceta Sanitaria ombudsperson, after proposal by the editorial committee, which will make their process of selection public. At any rate, to ensure proper fulfilment of the functions, activities and powers of the ombudsperson, they will have to be fully guaranteed with total independence from SESPAS and from the Gaceta Sanitaria publishing bodies.

7. Gaceta Sanitaria response to cases of scientific fraud

Gaceta Sanitaria has taken a public position against fraud in scientific publications and is prepared to act against it, for which collaboration from the authors and readers is needed. Depending on the seriousness of each case, Gaceta Sanitaria will act with a gradient of actions that can go from warning the authors, to filing a complaint with the legally responsible individuals at the organisation where they work, and finally to public removal of the article, indicating all the relevant information in an editorial note. The support of the editorial committee will be required for this final action, while the first two actions can be taken by the journal management. The behaviour of the editorial committee in the face of a suspected scientific fraud will be based on the regulations of the Council of Science Editors (CSE's White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications). The reason for this is that there is no similar organisation in Spain or in Europe, and the recently-created Research Ethics Committee has not made any public recommendations yet.

The potentially fraudulent actions can be deliberate, or produced by ignorance or negligence. Fraud will only be considered to have been committed in cases in which deliberate action, bad faith and intention to trick the readers of Gaceta Sanitaria are documented, including the following:

- a. Data falsification.
- b. Plagiarism.
- c. Inappropriate authorship.
- d. Manipulation of data analysis.
- e. Inappropriate and biased action as the reviewer or editor.
- f. Breach of the regulations on research in Spain.

8. Gaceta Sanitaria Blogosphere and Social Networks.

Gaceta Sanitaria also offers other communication areas, spurred by the incorporation of the tools of the Web 2.0, among which are the journal blogs (editorial committee blog, SESPAS scientific societies blog, guest blog), as well as its social communication channels Facebook and Twitter. Its users have to follow the recommendations of the World Medical Association for ethical use of social networks. Among these recommendations, some especially notable ones are the following: ensuring the objectivity and accuracy of published information, adopting a conservative approach on disclosing personal patient information (ensuring in this case that everything indicated in the current legislation on data protection has been complied with), declaring any conflict of interest and speaking in a serious, reasonable way in the discussion.

¹¹http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/wp-content/uploads/entire_whitepaper.pdf, accessed 01/01/2019.

¹²<https://www.wma.net/policies-post/wma-statement-on-the-professional-and-ethical-use-of-social-media/>, accessed 01/01/2019.

Gaceta Sanitaria promises to monitor the quality of the contents published by the editorial committee. However, the participation of other individuals is their responsibility and cannot be attributed in any way to Gaceta Sanitaria. Gaceta Sanitaria is also committed to being transparent and will only erase the input that is considered offensive, that breaches personal privacy or that refers to issues that are totally unrelated to the journal.

You should checking the policy on author rights (copyright) of any information that you wish to share on the Gaceta Sanitaria social networks. Avoid publishing without the author's permission any information not allowing this practice. If internet content with a copyright that permits its publication is shared, the URL from which it came has to be indicated.