

The IHE-EHR Code of Good Practice

Preamble

The development and proper function of scientific journals, regardless of their area of expertise, is beneficial for the entire academic community. In recent decades, the publication of articles in quality journals has become a leading indicator of researchers' career paths and international recognition. Furthermore, it is a fundamental element in network formation, project allocation and promotions within the academic world. This situation is reflected in the growing tendency of certain prominent journals to disclose their publication guidelines and Codes of Good Practice in order to guarantee ethical conduct in the internal functions of editorial teams, relationships with authors and reviewers, and the evaluation and editing processes. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has been assisting editorial boards of scientific journals with the aim to promote proper conduct and pursue inappropriate practices on an international scale. In Spain, the *Fundación Española de Ciencia y Tecnología* (FECYT - Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology) has begun working in this same direction.

In this context, and taking into account key international recommendations, IHE-EHR considers it necessary to publish a Code of Good Practice aimed at making the internal functions of our Editorial Board more transparent and predictable. We believe that this will improve our editorial procedures while preventing and regulating the resolution of conflicts of interest that inevitably arise in these processes. A large part of this Code compiles practices that have become standard to the IHE-EHR Editorial Board over the years. At the same time, we have introduced certain innovations in our relationship with authors and reviewers that we believe will optimize the function of the journal as well as our editorial processes.

1. Objectives of the IHE-EHR Code of Good Practice:

- Adapt editorial practices to the recommendations of leading organisms and reference institutions in journal quality control (COPE, FECYT).
- Systematize the editorial criteria used by IHE-EHR and make these criteria public, especially those referring to possible conflicts of interest.

- Promote transparency in the decision-making process of IHE-EHR, both within the Board as well as in author-reviewer relationships.

2. The Editor and Editorial Board:

The Editor as well as the members of the Editorial Board should:

- Actively pursue ways to improve the quality of IHE-EHR in all scientific and editorial aspects.
- Establish means to determine the opinions of authors, readers and reviewers regarding the journal; implement measures that are considered appropriate improvements.
- Maintain absolute confidentiality about the material received and concerning discussions that are part of the decision-making process.
- Take initiatives to promote ethical behavior in research and article publication, while establishing processes to report and penalize inappropriate conduct (plagiarism, multiple submissions of manuscripts, data manipulation, erroneous or inadequate citations, etc.).
- Place the interests of IHE-EHR before personal interests when conflicts of interest arise. This means that any and all members of the Board should abstain from making decisions about articles submitted by department colleagues and people with whom they have a hierarchical relationship of any kind, including co-authors, members of the same research group, family members, friends and any persons in general with whom they collaborate or compete professionally.

3.- Editorial Board Decisions:

Members of the Board who have invited or suggested a researcher to submit his/her article to IHE-EHR should inform the Editor and the rest of the Board of this fact.

When an article is received, any members of the Board who consider that their opinion about the paper (author or topic) may be either positively or negatively influenced by his/her own interests should notify the Editor and refrain from evaluating the article. It is the duty of the Editor and the members of the Board to be aware of reviews that may present any possible conflicts of interest.

The decisions of the Editorial Board are based on quality, relevance of the study and its adherence to the formal IHE-EHR guidelines. Other assessments that are not related with these criteria will be avoided.

Books that are reviewed by the journal are selected by the Book Review Editor in accordance with criteria for quality and relevance.

Book review authors are selected according to criteria related to the topic of discussion. The book author is not allowed to propose any book reviewers. When the author of the book is a member of the Editorial Board, none of the Board members will be selected as reviewers, and foreign reviewers will be designated.

4.- The Peer Review Process

The peer review is a double-blind process; therefore, the identity of authors and reviewers remains confidential at all times.

Selected external reviewers are always experts in either the topic dealt with or the methodology of the article and present no conflicts of interest with the authors. In situations of two contradictory opinions from two reviewers, a third reviewer will be consulted.

Any objections that authors may have about certain persons reviewing their article are carefully analyzed; if valid reasons are provided, we will respect their wishes.

5.- Reviewers

The Editorial Board gives the reviewers a set of guidelines on which to base their opinions. The reviewers are asked to be objective and to refrain from evaluating the article if they have any conflicts of interest.

We require the reviewers to maintain the utmost confidentiality and to abstain from sharing or commenting on the articles they have received for evaluation.

The reviewers should express their ideas as clearly as possible while using the arguments and references necessary to defend their criticisms. They are also requested to take note of ethical aspects of the article (plagiarism, etc.). Likewise, we ask them to refrain from offensive criticisms and those of a personal nature.

The journal periodically revises its list of reviewers and eliminates those persons who have not correctly performed their duties.

6.- Authors

Authors are reminded that authorship of a scientific article should be strictly limited to those persons who have made a substantial contribution to the research involved.

When submitting their manuscripts through the Elsevier Editorial System (EES), authors are required to explicitly define any possible conflicts of interest that their text may generate.

Authors are once again reminded to acknowledge their scientific references (particularly the origin of their ideas, methodologies, sources, etc.) in a clear manner so that readers may consult these citations and corroborate their usage when necessary.

7.- Complaints and Conflict Resolution

The Editor is committed to quickly and reasonably responding to any complaint that is considered pertinent, be it from authors, reviewers or readers. Cases of serious conflicts will be discussed with the Editorial Board, and a joint decision and response will be agreed upon.

When arbitrating specific conflicts of interests, the COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics) guidelines will be followed as closely as possible (<http://publicationethics.org/>).

8.- Relationship with the AEHE

The relationship between the IHE-EHR Editorial Board and the AEHE and its Board is based on the principle of editorial independence.