

Research Ethics: A Lost Term?

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The 1974 Declaration of Helsinki defines research ethics as an application of fundamental ethical principles in medical research [1]. While the main purpose of scientific research is to benefit humanity, many institutions use research productivity of a scientist in making decisions for academic promotions. This pressure for rapid publication has prompted some authors to pursue unethical means. On several occasions, well-known journals had to retract original articles after evidence of unethical practices such as plagiarism and fraudulent data was found [2]. On other occasions, prestigious journals such as British Medical Journal (BMJ) had to publish “expression of concern” where, despite compelling evidence of data manipulation, the article could not be retracted because such an action would have required definitive proof [3]. Journal of Pioneering Medical Sciences (Formerly Journal of Pakistan Medical Students) has been a staunch supporter of maintaining a quorum of research ethics at all levels since its inception. Being a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), JPMS ensures that all article submissions by authors clearly clarify any conflict of interest or competing interests at the time of submission and that the authors are solely responsible for accuracy of all the statements made in the manuscript. Each article published at JPMS carries a conflict of interest statement. But like all journals, JPMS editorial office believes authors statements and does not perform a vigorous background to confirm the validity of all claims made by authors.

Recently, a breach of research ethics about a study published in JPMS was brought to our attention. We received an email from a laboratory investigator about two publications in JPMS claiming that data produced by him were published without his consent. We contacted the corresponding authors of the manuscript and asked them if the allegations were true. Corresponding author of one manuscript accepted that the data were used without permission and agreed to retract the manuscript. For the second manuscript, corresponding author requested if we could include additional names as

authors on the published manuscript under investigation. This request was consistent with the allegations and therefore, the JPMS editorial team decided to retract the second manuscript as well. The statement of retraction is included in this issue of the JPMS.

As a journal that aims for excellence in science, JPMS believes in following the highest ethical practices. To ensure such acts do not continue in the future, JPMS have decided to ban the two authors from any further submissions at JPMS. We also take this opportunity to appeal to all authors to maintain the research ethics guidelines while submitting articles to JPMS and to any other journal.

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