PUBLICATION ETHICS AS A MANIFESTATION OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

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AIM

- Provide a backdrop for other papers
  - Where do they fit in
  - With reference to the underlying principles
- Only an overview
DISCLAIMER
Not unique and esoteric
Based on same principles as professional ethics
PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
Stable, though incomplete set of norms widely shared by members of the profession (Beauchamp & Childress)
General agreement, not necessarily consensus
Could be implicit
Increasingly in writing
Code of Ethics
But codes only represent part of professional ethics

Underlying principles are important
KANT (1724-1804)
Humans as rational beings

- Capable of making moral decisions
- Right and wrong
- Unique ability
- Give them an inner worth (dignity)
- Must respect this dignity of people
Implication is that
- we must respect all persons
- irrespective of how we judge them
PRINCIPLES
Eight - arbitrary
Nomenclature can differ
Not mutually exclusive
Prima facie equal weight
Can be in conflict
Best balance
RESPONSIBILITY
About accountability to others
All publication role players are accountable to greater society and discipline or profession to advance the knowledge in the field by making knowledge available.
But, this may be trumped by one of other principles
AUTONOMY

- We must respect people’s right to make decisions about things that are of importance to them.
Ensure that all participants and role players make informed, free and voluntary decisions
Anonymous use of information legitimately obtained by a forensic psychiatrist (Kapoor et al.)
RESPECT FOR HUMANITY
Respect for dignity and rights of people

Two elements

- Dignity
- Rights (moral and legal)
Rights

- Prisoner’s life story
- Intellectual property
- Plagiarism*
Dignity

Respect dignity of people irrespective of how we judge them
- Humiliate
- Defame or insult
- Pejorative language
- Insulting and intemperate

>> Debate is good
Privacy
- Right to be left alone
- Confidentiality
Hematologist writing about a person’s platelets

Forensic psychiatrist writing about mental status of a person who murdered another in a notorious case
Subtle disrespect*
Manner in which we interact with others
Manners

Acknowledging others
Uncommon courtesy

One thing that's changed in this era of social media and emails is that manners have gone out the window. Is common courtesy dead?

It's so rare to get a return email from some people that you figure there is something wrong with your inbox. Maybe you've turned on spam by mistake? Nope! Joe or Jenny from work or your tenant or bank manager just simply isn't getting back to you, and possibly never will. You send another email, perhaps a text, or voicemail. And as time passes, so does your self-esteem. There's nothing quite as diminishing as being ignored, or made to feel invisible.

The whole issue is about respect. And it's one of the things that's vanished in the speed and pace of the new world order. Not that there weren't rude people before. It's just that now rudeness is acceptable because electronic media
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✓ Punctuality

» Responding promptly

» Keeping people informed

» Providing speedy feedback
INTEGRITY
Simple honesty
Examples mentioned above

- Plagiarism

Fraudulent research
Preliminary report

Several dozens fraudulent papers

Science of 2 April 2011

Facing fraud charges
Authors

“Is this material worth publishing?”
(Walter & Bloch, 2001, p. 33)

Conflict of interests: Neville

Nature of submission: Richard

Authorship
Overlaps with
Fairness

No unjustified discrimination or favouritism
Procedural justice
- Fairness in decision making
Requires

- Take into account all relevant information
- Consider relevant information only
- Open minded – open to persuasion
- Unbiased
Actual and perceived bias

Perceptions are important

What would an independent, reasonable and informed observer think?
Reviewers

- Blind peer review
- Does not necessarily remove risk*
✓ Unconscious
✓ Theoretical orientation
FIDELITY
Where there is a power imbalance

- Those with less power (trusters)
- Must trust that those in power (trustees) will act
  - Competently
  - In their best interests
Trustees must therefore

- Be trustworthy
- Act in the best interests of trusters, even if to their own detriment
Editors are in powerful positions
Must therefore not

- Exploit their position
- Create a risk of exploitation
- Create impression there may have been exploitation
A partner’s paper
Must appoint competent reviewers
Ensure that they do a competent review*
NONMALEFICENCE
Do no harm

Not intentionally or negligently

Refrain from engaging in behaviour where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk of harm
How can we harm?

- Careers
- Reputations
- Self-confidence
- Health
Often not malicious
Potential of harm when, e.g.,

- Reviewers exceed their competence
- Editors are overburdened
BENEFICENCE
Do good

Anticipate and neutralise factors that may cause harm even when there is no legal obligation

Constructive feedback
CONCLUSION

- Publication ethics
  - Is part and parcel of our publication activities
  - Same principles as those that underlies professional ethics
Every role player has different ethical duties.

Often requires finding the right balance between conflicting principles.
THANK YOU