

The Relevance of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors Recommendations to Emerging Journals

Ibnosina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (IJMBS) has been since its inception following the recommendations for the conduct, reporting, editing, and publication of scholarly work in medical journals, issued by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Also, IJMBS has been on the ICJME list since 2010, and the editorial board is committed to adhering strictly to these guidelines.^[1] ICMJE is a nonprofit working group of biomedical journal editors.^[2] ICMJE is widely recognized as a leading institution providing guidance for the reporting of biomedical research and health-related issues in biomedical journals.

ICMJE was established in 1978, and it is widely noted for its recommendations originally named “The Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals” intended to help all those involved in peer review and biomedical publishing create and distribute accurate, clear, unbiased medical journal articles. This document has since been revised several times, and the latest update was released in December 2018.^[3] It has recently been named “Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals” to reflect its wider coverage. The full recommendations are freely available in the www.icmje.org and citable as “ICMJE Recommendations.”^[3] The ICMJE guidelines discuss and provide guidance on several aspects of scholarly publishing [Table 1].

ICMJE is constituted by editors of fourteen major general medical journals from different countries, plus one representative for the US National Library of Medicine and one representative for the World Association of Biomedical Journal Editors.^[2]

Although the ICMJE is not an open membership organization, a vast number of medical journals, worldwide, adopted the ICMJE’s recommendations as rules. The ICMJE encourages all relevant individuals and entities to use the recommendations and reproduce them provided a link is included to allow access to the latest updates from the world-class medical editors.^[2] Indeed, for emerging journals, adopting these recommendations saves time and effort and provides a readily available framework for inception, development, and progress using international standards. At IJMBS, we found these recommendations very helpful for many years. For instance, in addition to the online declarations made during the submission process, we also incorporate the four cardinal disclosures within each article on an individual basis [Table 2]. In addition, the responsible editors and peer reviewers are also named on the articles they handle for transparency. Also we suggest that the recommendations are used to construct the

Table 1: The outlines of contents of the updated International Committee of Medical Journal Editors recommendations (December 2018)

About the recommendations

- Purpose of the recommendations
- Who should use the recommendations?
- History of the recommendations

Roles and responsibilities of authors, contributors, reviewers, editors, publishers, and owners

- Defining the role of authors and contributors
- Conflicts of interest
- Responsibilities in the submission and peer-review process
- Journal owners and editorial freedom
- Protection of research participants

Publishing and editorial issues related to publication in medical journals

- Corrections, retractions, republications, and version control
- Scientific misconduct, expressions of concern, and retraction
- Copyright
- Overlapping publications
- Correspondence
- Fees
- Supplements, theme issues, and special series
- Sponsorship of partnerships
- Electronic publishing
- Advertising

Manuscript preparation and submission

- Preparing a manuscript for submission to a medical journal
- Sending the manuscript to the journal

Based on: ICMJE. About ICMJE. Available from: <http://www.icmje.com>. [Last accessed on 2018 Dec 25]^[2]

core curriculum for educational events in effective writing, a skill that is seriously lacking in many developing regions.^[4]

Perhaps one of the issues of great relevance to research and publishing in developing regions is that the four cardinal ICMJE recommendations on authorship criteria seem to be ignored as was discussed recently in this journal and elsewhere.^[5,6] The recommended four criteria carry both legal and ethical implications as they aim to ensure the *reward* of the authors for the work they wrote and the *accountability* of authors for all aspects of the work published under their names.^[7] The ICMJE expects authors to have confidence in the integrity of the contributions of their coauthors. By adhering to these recommendations, authorship misconduct in all its forms can be avoided,^[7] and many incidents of authorship conflicts and disputes are minimized or totally abolished.^[8]

Of particular relevance to developing regions and emerging journal that the ICMJE recommendations on the authors’ responsibilities in the submission and peer-review process

Table 2: The Ibmossina Journal of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences' Mandatory disclosures in all articles*

Authors' Contribution: Depending on circumstances, authors have to indicate the specific contributions to the work being published reflecting fulfilling the ICMJE's authorship criteria

Conflict of interest: Authors are required to declare all potential multiplicities of interest or explicitly document the lack thereof

Sponsorship and funding: All sources of funding from public, society, or industry must be declared otherwise a negative statement need to be included

Statement on compliance with ethical principles: For all studies involving human subjects, authors must confirm the study was approved by an ERC or IRB including the name and place of the granting body and reference number. Where appropriate, the status of consent and its nature (written or verbal) need to be stated

Special arrangement for case reports: A special "Declaration of Patient Consent" statement is now mandatory for all case reports. A typical example should sound like so *"The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent forms. In the form, the patient consented for her images and other clinical information to be reported in the journal. The patient understands that name and initial will not be published, and outstanding efforts will be made to conceal identity, but anonymity cannot be guaranteed"*

*No manuscript can be processed unless these are included.

ICMJE: International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, ERC: Ethics Research Committee, IRB: Institutional Review Board

addressed the threat caused by predatory journals to the scholarly publishing movement. Predatory journals are advertising themselves as "scholarly medical journals" yet do not function as such. These journals seem to accept and publish almost all submissions and charge article processing (or publication) fees in return.^[9] Developing regions seem the main target for many for these journals. Unfortunately, there is a low awareness among authors and editors of this serious matter.^[9] The recommendations reminded authors of their responsibility to evaluate the integrity, history, practices, and reputation of the journals to which they submit manuscripts and if in doubt to seek help from senior colleagues or reputable websites.^[10] In support of the struggle against predatory journals and publishers, IJMBS has published several recent articles addressing this issue.^[5,7,9]

Finally, before we strongly urge our authors, reviewers, and editors to study these updated ICMJE recommendations carefully and follow them strictly. IJMBS will persevere with its mission and commitment to the principles and good practices in scholarly publishing.^[11]

Author's contribution

Equal.

Compliance with ethical principles

No human or animal experiments are reported.

Conflicts of interests

None.

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