

Why and how should professional societies and their journals promote scientific integrity in their publications?

Scientific integrity in publications is not only for the self. It is also for academic and research institutions. It is also for professional societies and their journals. At a time when fake news flourishes, these research units must keep themselves above and beyond those and adhere to scientific integrity. This discourse focuses on professional societies and their journals. Many professional societies own official publications as their way of providing a platform where the scientific works of their members are disseminated.

In the course of doing this, professional societies are bound to compel with adhering to research integrity principles. They have to commit to improving practices for a more responsible scholarly publication, to have a better understanding of breaches in integrity, and to provide a more conducive atmosphere for research in their specialty.

Adhering to research integrity principles forms the basic trust in its products and the research outputs. Research misconduct has its negative effect, including damage to the reputation of the researcher and, more importantly, adverse effects to patients and to the public. Research integrity will maintain public confidence in the research evidence.^[1]

Practicing integrity in research, as defined by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) of the USA, means planning, proposing, performing, reporting, and reviewing research in accordance with a set of core values, including objectivity, honesty, openness, accountability, fairness, and stewardship.^[2] Promoting responsible research practices paves the way for research integrity.

What does this mean, then, for professional societies and their journals, which are very much a part of the research enterprise? The development of both descriptive and aspirational norms gives them some things to adhere to and some things to attempt to achieve.

For journals, the NASEM includes the following in their best practices checklist:^[2]

1. Practicing transparency
 - This begins with updates of author instructions as well as ethical policies for authors, reviewers,

and editors. These policies need to address how allegations of misconduct are handled and processed. Retractions, corrections, clarifications, and apologies need to be communicated. Preventing conflicts of interest on the part of the editorial staff should also be guided by policies.

2. Adopting policies ensuring openness
 - Journals need to work with authors, research institutions, and sponsors to ensure that data and code can be verified at any point and that these data have been de-identified.
3. Authorship contributions
 - Journals should require authors to describe their individual contributions in the publications and these are published together with the article.
4. Training and education
 - Editors need to know responsible publishing practices. Training and education for editors and reviewers will help prepare them for their tasks.
5. Collaboration
 - Collective efforts by different journals and comparing best practices can further improve standards and practices with regard to publication. These serve to reinforce research integrity.

The group of McNutt *et al.* has recommendations to promote integrity in scientific publication through transparency in authors' contributions and responsibilities.^[3] These are consistent with the third recommendation of NASEM. These include setting standards for authorship, providing expectations for corresponding authors, and committing to the nomenclature of authorship contribution. Being a corresponding author entails ensuring all authors approved the manuscript before submission and ensures compliance with the transparency and reproducibility standards of the journal.

The Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) Factor provides a measure to indicate whether a journal adheres to open science practices.^[4] It assesses journal policies as to transparency and reproducibility. It has eight standards, including citation standards, data transparency, analytic methods, research materials, reporting research design and methodology, preregistration of studies, preregistration of analysis plans, and replication. The

TOP committee suggests adopting standards that are relevant to the journal. These will provide researcher's expectations as well.

Professional societies, likewise, need to foster education in responsible conduct of research (RCR) for its members. This education can take the form of workshops, symposia, or sessions in conventions. Case studies can be discussed. Educational materials can be made. RCR education taken by a professional society can really boost its research integrity. In addition, McNutt *et al.*^[3] recommend discussing this in their editorials in journals, thus, this write-up.

The Philippine Obstetrical and Gynecological Society (POGS) through its own official publication the *Philippine Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (PJOG) provides the platform where the scientific works of its members as well as trainees from its accredited institutions are disseminated. POGS and PJOG are taking utmost efforts to adhere to responsible research practices. The process of peer review is entrenched into the system. The anti-plagiarism policy has long been in place. The appeals process is explained. Editorial policies, authorship criteria, and author instructions have been updated. Authorship contributions are now stipulated in each publication following the Contributor Roles Taxonomy or CReDiT (credit.niso.org). Disclosure of conflicts of interest by authors, if any, is also made. Editors and reviewers have taken capacity-building training and education courses which have further clarified the roles of editors and reviewers and refined the review process. Our constant communication with the Philippine National Journal Selection Committee has given us the opportunity to learn from the best practices of other local specialty journals.

In the future, we hope to see RCR and research integrity sessions becoming part of education activities of the society where cases can be discussed, both highlighting best practices and breaches and how to avoid the latter. For a professional society such as the POGS, which requires research outputs to become part of its membership, a professional society which promotes research among its members and follows a research agenda, RCR, and adherence to research integrity must be in place. Awareness is the first key step toward such.

There is still a lot to work on, but we are taking the right road.

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