



“Wall of Shame”—a Medical Journal’s Highest Code of Conduct?

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Received: 13 January 2023 / Accepted: 15 February 2023 / Published online: 20 February 2023
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Dear Sir,

Recently, the editors of *Cureus* took an extraordinary step probably for the first time, to publish a Wall of Shame page online to highlight unethical behavior, academic dishonesty, blatant plagiarism, data falsification, payment fraud, and peer review fraud to dissuade publication misconduct by prospective authors. The announcement was controversial, but it led to a significant decrease in fraud and author misconduct since the publication of this Wall of Shame (https://www.cureus.com/wall_of_shame). On being found guilty of unethical practice during or after the publication of the manuscript by the independent investigating team of the journal editorial board and by the parent institution where the study originated, the manuscript is not only retracted by the journal, but the offending authors are permanently suspended from *Cureus* and added publicly to the Wall of Shame. All types of conflicts of interest were also brought out in the open including a few instances of ghost-writer or gifted authorship, by the *Cureus* team.

The concept of creating a “Wall of Shame” by a medical journal is a renaissance in the editorial process and will bring out more honesty and transparency among the authors, but in an online opinion poll by the “Retraction Watch” on “Is a public wall of shame a good idea for journals?”, only 41% agreed with the concept (<https://retractionwatch.com/2022/04/12/is-a-wall-of-shame-a-good-idea-for-journals/>). The public opinion against this policy was that offenders are selected for the Wall of Shame at the discretion of the *Cureus* editorial team. There was no third-party involvement for a free and fair unbiased trial.

There will be sometimes a finger raised on the editor of the journal and the peer reviewers of the manuscript for being a bit casual and missing the manuscript for data or image plagiarism at the initial screening. There is another loophole wherein many journal submission sites give the choice to the authors to recommend the reviewers for their own papers, and such a practice will invariably lead to a selection bias and conflict of interest. Finally, there is the problem of the National Medical Commission of India insisting on publication in indexed journals for academic promotion each year, and so there is a rush by the teachers of a medical institution to urgently send any research for publication within the specific deadline without any scrutiny, with the majority of the data or statistics being prepared by the postgraduate students or residents and often sent to some sham journals [1]. This name-and-shame policy in such incidences may be a bit of an overkill.

The only way to escape being insulted in the wall of shame list is to publish, without any blemish, original data, maintain professional and editorial ethics, and check every manuscript with reliable plagiarism checking sites before submission to the journal.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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Publisher’s Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

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