

New guidelines for authors

In this issue (page 541) we are publishing changes to our guidelines for authors, which are also available online at www.smw.ch. The changes will be applied to manuscripts submitted after October 1, 2007.

The goal of the guidelines is to assist authors in selecting a journal to which their work can be submitted, support them in writing a paper, and impose certain rules mainly regarding ethical or legal aspects of scientific publications.

The first modification concerns the type of paper we wish to consider for publication. In future we shall be discouraging the submission of papers which depend on questionnaires or phone or electronic inquiries. Such studies are usually hampered by unacceptable selection bias due to a limited response rate [1, 2]. Further, the Editorial Board's experience of many of these studies in past years has shown that more often than not the questions under study have low publication priority. The questions addressed are frequently limited to the fields of quality control, medico-economic issues, or adherence to guidelines. Through this addendum to our guidelines we wish to help authors to save time and select another more appropriate journal for their work.

The second change concerns the registration of trials before starting a clinical interventional

study. We are committed to the "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals" of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. As announced in previous editorials [3, 4], the Swiss Medical Weekly will also require all studies starting after October 1, 2007 to be registered in a primary registry that participates in WHO's International Clinical Trial Registry Platform (<http://www.who.int/ictrp/en/index.html>).

Next, we have clarified the requirements for publication of material that could lead to the identification of a given patient and thus violate his or her anonymity. We also wish to ensure that patients or guardians are fully aware of the exact information published in the print version *and* the internet.

Finally, some copyright issues have been simplified. Like many other biomedical journals, we as an open access journal require full transfer of the copyright in published papers to the publisher. This will simplify granting of permission to use published material in secondary publications. The publisher will of course insist that the original source is correctly referenced.

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Editor-in-chief SMW

References

- 1 Hille ET, Elbertse L, Gravenhorst JB, Brand R, Verloove-Vanhorick SP, on behalf of the Dutch POPS-19 Collaborative Study Group. Nonresponse bias in a follow-up study of 19-year-old adolescents born as preterm infants. *Pediatrics*. 2005;116:e662-e666.
- 2 Korkeila K, Suominen S, Ahvenainen J, Ojanlatva A, Rautava P, Helenius H et al. Non-response and related factors in a nationwide health survey. *Eur J Epidemiol*. 2001;17:991-9.
- 3 Schaffner A. Old year out, New Year in – Happy New Year from all of us to our authors, referees and readers. *Swiss Med Wkly*. 2006;136:3.
- 4 Schaffner A. Swiss Medical Weekly entering its 5th year as an English-language general medical journal. *Swiss Med Wkly*. 2005;135:3.