



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Editor's Oversight of Journal Article Reviews and Reviewers

Author(s)

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Year

2000

Description

A scenario about how a journal editor should choose reviewers and the possible complications that could arise.

Body

The editor of J.AAA asks Professor Sharp to review a manuscript submitted to the journal by Professor Writer, an investigator at another university who works in the same area as Sharp. Sharp realizes that the work reports research that is very similar to research that he, Sharp, is conducting.

Sharp decides not to disqualify himself from reviewing the manuscript, but to take the maximum time allowed to submit the review. At the end of the review period, Sharp sends a letter recommending that J.AAA reject the work by Writer, because the work is "not novel." Sharp claims that it is simply a repeat of the work that Sharp has published in the J.BBB. (Sharp's work actually only under review by J.BBB.)

- Would you, as an editor of a journal, knowingly send a manuscript to a direct competitor of the author of an article? If you would, what if any precautions do you take to ensure fairness of review?

- Given that reviewers need to be knowledgeable about the work they review, would you expect a reviewer in Sharp's position necessarily to disqualify himself and return the manuscript? Why, or why not? How would the reviewer learn of these expectations?
- If you received a review claiming to have already published such work, but without a citation of the published work, what would you do?
- If you discovered that the reviewer's work in J. BBB had not actually been published, what action would you take? Would you notify anyone about the reviewer's misrepresentation?

Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

Contributor(s)

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Discipline(s)

Research Ethics

Publisher

Online Ethics Center