

## **Hypothetical Dilemmas at Peer-reviewed Research Journals**

### **Case 1 Good, Better, or Best**

**The editor receives a manuscript, sends it for review, and the two reviewers independently agree that it should be published but only after extensive revisions, which they outline. The editor gives the authors provisional acceptance contingent upon their making the revisions to the editor's satisfaction.**

**The authors notify the editor that they intend to make the revisions.**

**Before the revised manuscript arrives, the editor receives another manuscript on the same topic from a different set of authors—and this manuscript reports a much better study than the first authors' paper even if they make the requested revisions.**

**What should the editor do?**

**(Does it matter whether author group 1 has replied that they intend to make the requested revisions?)**

---

### **Case #2 Stand or fall on their own (*or*, authors have the right to be sloppy in print)**

**A journal's editor feels strongly that, because faculty authors are judged for promotion and tenure (and grants) to a great extent by the quality of their published articles, the articles should not receive more than ordinary copyediting (checking for correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation).**

**The editor says that if reviewers recommend a manuscript highly based on scientific merit, and it is chosen for publication, it is not a journal editor's place to point out mistakes in logic, counting, fact, or to clarify ambiguous and misleading language. In other words, authors are responsible for their papers, mistakes and all, and these mistakes should appear as part of the record so that colleagues can more accurately judge the caliber of the work.**

**Do you agree?**

### **Case # 3**

## **You may go to the head of the line**

**A journal has a backlog of accepted, approved papers ready to publish, and the average time between acceptance and publication is now one year. The editor confers with the editorial board about how best to handle the backlog.**

**Version A: A major pharmaceutical house has volunteered to underwrite the publication of a special issue that will contain almost half of the backlog. The "price" is that the issue would have to publish advertisements for the firm's products and (clearly labeled) "advertorials" giving the firm's position on a sensitive issue in drug testing.**

**What advice should the editorial board give the editor?**

**Version B: The editor decides to set optional page charges for publishing double-sized issues of the journal. Authors who can pay the charges will be published ahead of schedule in the early issues; others will continue to wait until their papers appear in order of acceptance.**

**What advice should the editorial board give the editor?**

---

**Source of cases:**

Case #1 is an adaptation and expansion of one prepared by the 1988 Conference on Ethics and Policy in Scientific Publication, held at the National Academy of Sciences.

Case #2 was created by Addeane S. Caelleigh.

Case #3, version A is by Addeane S. Caelleigh; version B is adapted from a scenario prepared for the conference.

All cases are based on actual events at journals.

© by Addeane S. Caelleigh, 2007. Permission is granted to reproduce this document for educational and non-commercial purposes so long as this copyright statement is included. Specific permission must be obtained for use in commercial settings or to reproduction in electronic form (contact [asc8f@virginia.edu](mailto:asc8f@virginia.edu) to request permission).