

Cultivation of Comprehensive Abilities of Young Editors of Scientific Journals (Post-print)

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Abstract

Reflecting on the incidents disclosed by the National Natural Science Foundation of China in 2016 concerning manuscript retractions due to research misconduct, young editors must continuously enhance their capacity to identify academic misconduct through practical experience. Additionally, communication platforms should be established among various functional supervision departments to continuously improve the professional competencies of scientific journal editors. Simultaneously, young editors should cultivate their learning abilities in practice, engage in self-encouragement and self-affirmation in both work and study, and explore uncharted areas in their professional duties. Only through such endeavors can they broaden their knowledge and professional expertise, thereby developing into comprehensive editorial professionals.

Full Text

Preamble

Cultivating the Comprehensive Abilities of Young Editors of Scientific Journals

Abstract: Reflecting on the 2016 announcement by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) regarding manuscript retractions due to research misconduct, young editors must continuously enhance their ability to identify academic misconduct through practice. It is essential to establish communication platforms among various functional supervision departments and continuously improve the professional competence of scientific journal editors. Simultaneously, young editors should cultivate their learning abilities in daily work, encourage and affirm themselves through work and study, and explore unknown aspects of their profession. Only in this way can they expand their knowledge and professional expertise to become comprehensive editorial talent.

Keywords: young editors; scientific journals; comprehensive talent

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1. Improving the Professional Competence of Young Editors

Young editors of medical scientific journals must acquire diverse knowledge in editing and publishing, participate in academic seminars, and exchange ideas with peers. A message from the Young Editors Forum reported that the NSFC held a 2016 conference in Beijing on “Defending Scientific Ethics and Opposing Research Misconduct,” where eight typical cases of research misconduct investigated during 2015–2016 were disclosed, along with decisions on 61 recently investigated cases. This serves as a warning to young editors that editorial departments and journal offices must prioritize manuscript similarity checking to prevent author misconduct. Taking our medical journal as an example, we conduct plagiarism detection not only at initial submission but also before final typesetting, which effectively prevents academic misconduct. However, this cannot prevent manuscripts with high similarity ratios from being resubmitted to other related medical specialty journals. Some young editors have reported that certain similar medical journals do not perform similarity checks, and even when they do, database upload delays can result in inaccurate detection during the time lag, leading to the publication of articles with artificially low similarity ratios but poor quality [1-2]. We recommend that young editors in all journals prioritize manuscript quality and strictly resist academic misconduct. Journal integrity requires the collective effort of all editors to attract high-level, quality articles and enhance academic influence.

1.1 Unifying Plagiarism Detection Standards Across Medical Sub-specialty Journals

Our journal uses a similarity ratio below 20% as the acceptance criterion. However, some manuscripts rejected by our journal are later published elsewhere because certain sub-specialty journals or editorial departments have set higher thresholds, while others consider normal citations acceptable even with high overall similarity. Therefore, it is necessary to unify plagiarism detection standards. Recent research has reported that we cannot simply judge academic misconduct by the numerical similarity ratio alone but must conduct comprehensive analysis of the duplicated content. For instance, medical experimental articles often share identical laboratory methods and principles, which cannot be judged solely on similarity percentages. After removing these repetitive methodological sections, we must assess whether the remaining content is novel and can

independently support the article, enabling rapid identification of duplicate submission or redundant publication. For articles that differ only in patient case numbers, clinical manifestations, or specimen sources while having nearly identical results and discussion sections, it is difficult to detect misconduct at a glance. Therefore, expert review opinions must be integrated for comprehensive judgment. Journals or editorial departments in the same specialty should discuss and communicate to unify plagiarism detection standards and establish consistent criteria for identifying academic misconduct, enabling editors in similar or related medical fields to conduct checks according to unified standards and effectively control academic misconduct.

1.2 Establishing Communication Platforms Among Related Medical Specialty Journals

When a journal discovers fraudulent academic misconduct, the absence of a resource-sharing platform prevents timely notification to other related specialty journal editorial departments for prevention. For fraudulent articles involving altered patient numbers, different methods, or fabricated data, and for manuscripts revised by authors, the difficulty of identifying misconduct increases significantly. Editors must carefully calculate patient case numbers to detect redundant publication, wasting editorial time and effort. If a resource-sharing platform were established, editors discovering such cases could promptly inform colleagues at other related specialty journals, improving work efficiency. Current plagiarism detection systems can indicate optimal timing for similarity checks but cannot display previous submission histories. We recommend further developing the functions of academic misconduct detection systems to fully leverage resource-sharing platform advantages, leaving fraudsters no opportunity and better resisting academic misconduct [3-4].

1.3 Strengthening Author Ethics Education and Handling Research Misconduct Seriously

Journals should clearly state their policies regarding duplicate publication and other misconduct on their official websites or copyright pages, including notices from the Ministry of Education on seriously handling academic misconduct, to alert authors. During review, revision, and acceptance notification stages, journals should repeatedly inform authors via email about their stance and handling procedures for ethics violations, warning authors to cease any misconduct immediately. These mechanisms remain imperfect and require young editors to continuously summarize experiences and improve their editorial capabilities in practice.

2. Strengthening Young Editors' Sense of Mission and Learning Ability

As the first gatekeepers of manuscript quality, scientific journal editors must enhance their sense of mission, maintain a conscientious and responsible attitude in manuscript processing, and strictly adhere to high-quality standards in article selection. Scientific journal editing is mostly desk work involving mechanical and repetitive tasks, which can make young editors feel bored and develop a perfunctory attitude. Therefore, we must learn to motivate ourselves and enhance our sense of professional responsibility [5-8]. For medical journals, where papers are often written by frontline clinicians who conduct research in addition to their busy clinical practice, editors must be particularly responsible, carefully proofreading and typesetting manuscripts to ensure they meet journal standards for peer learning. Meanwhile, young editors must not only master their own specialty knowledge but also continuously absorb “fresh nutrients.” For medical journals, while mastering their own specialty, editors should also learn about cutting-edge knowledge in other sub-specialties to keep their minds continuously charged and maintain daily passion for diligent work. Young editors should actively participate in the 72-hour continuing education programs offered annually by press and publication bureaus, read peer journals to learn from other editors, translate foreign journals to deeply grasp the latest professional knowledge, learn the latest editing and publishing standards online, and consult senior editors or experts at work. Through these methods, young editors can enhance their learning abilities.

3. Comprehensive Qualities of Young Editors

Editors should seize every opportunity to develop their comprehensive abilities. Beyond daily manuscript editing, proofreading, and typesetting, the cultivation of comprehensive abilities and qualities is also crucial. When organizing activities and receiving various author calls with diverse requests, editors must find solutions while facing problems, thinking from multiple perspectives, which enhances adaptability. Editorial comprehensive qualities are demonstrated through such experiences. Work requires reasonable division of labor, with each person completing tasks according to their functions. Accumulating small achievements not only enhances participation and increases communication opportunities among colleagues but also improves work efficiency. Execution ability is crucial for completing any task, whether for senior leaders or bottom-level staff. Of course, leadership communication skills also significantly impact execution. If leaders fail to communicate tasks clearly, subordinates' execution will be affected, producing uneven results. When upper-level execution decreases, lower-level staff must solve problems beyond their capacity, hindering overall project development. Therefore, we must cultivate our comprehensive abilities to improve work efficiency.

Young editors must become composite talent with comprehensive abilities in the

“Internet+” era. In the “Internet+” age, competition among scientific journals ultimately boils down to talent competition, with the key to new and old media integration lying in human resources. Internet application in scientific journals places higher demands on current print media editors to connect with the digital era, transforming traditional editors into “Internet+” editors. On one hand, it requires editors to use computer systems for initial review, proofreading, and typesetting; on the other hand, it has given rise to composite senior talent combining journal network technicians and traditional editors. Such comprehensive talent can also be specifically responsible for developing and maintaining internet products such as journal websites, WeChat updates and push notifications, and online submission systems. Scientific journal comprehensive talent has emerged in this E-era, representing modern composite editorial talent familiar with traditional journal business knowledge, possessing solid professional foundations, and understanding how to use new media technology and knowledge to develop traditional journal operations. Young editors must improve their comprehensive abilities in work to transform toward this direction and become versatile hands in editorial departments [9-12].

Paper review, proofreading, and peer review have become daily routines for journal editors, requiring cooperation, mutual trust, and assistance among young editors from various journals. We must continuously learn to strengthen the construction of scientific journal academic quality while building the academic brand influence of medical journals. Editorial work has no end point, and as young editors, we are always on the road.

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