Publication Ethics in HIR

Eun-Young Kim, MD

Department of Clinical Pharmacology, Inje University Busan Paik Hospital, Busan, Korea

The Hwang Woo Suk scandal in the field of stem cell research reminded us of ethical consideration in research and publication. The scandal, in which fabricated papers and unethical donation of human oocytes were the main issues, had a large social impact worldwide, as well as in Korea. It was quite a shock to scientific society in Korea, as there had been efforts to establish ethical guidelines in the research field even before the scandal. The Korean Association of Institutional Review Boards (KAIRB) was founded in March 2002 under the auspices of the Korean Academy of Medical Sciences to bring the level of Korean IRBs up to the international standard. The Bioethics and Biosafety Act of 2003 was put into effect at the beginning of 2005 [1], even though some researchers thought that ethical guidelines were a barrier to the development of science [2]. These actions resulted in an establishment of guidelines for ethics in research and publication in many fields. One of the guidelines, "Good Publication Practice Guidelines for Medical Journals," issued in 2008 [3], was also adopted as part of Health Informatics Research (HIR)'s ethics guidelines.

In the field of healthcare informatics research, the HIR editorial board aims to publish high quality articles without any ethical problems. Recently, HIR editors have decided to review the HIR author's submission guidelines, including aspects of the ethical view. HIR also held a session for publication ethics in a 2011 annual symposium with two invited specialists, Chang Gok Hahm (Chung-Ang University College of Medicine, Seoul, Korea) and Eun Sung Hwang (University of Seoul, Seoul, Korea). Based on discussions about the ethics surrounding the review of submitted articles, an 'Ethical Considerations' section was introduced into the

'Instruction to Authors' in HIR. The section consists of four parts: 'Research ethics,' 'Authorship,' 'Conflict of interest,' and 'Copyright policy.' Prohibition of redundant publication is mentioned in the 'Editorial policy' section of the 'Editorial and Review Policy' section. Each manuscript is peer reviewed by three anonymous reviewers selected by the editor and associate editors ('Peer-review process' part). General ethical guidelines in HIR are described in the 'Research ethics' section, asking authors to provide IRB approval and Helsinki declaration compliance in human subject studies and for fields of research such as animal studies that were not mentioned directly. HIR adopted the guidelines "Good Publication Practice Guidelines for Medical Journals," "Guidelines on Good Publication Practice (The COPE Report, 2003)," and "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication" from The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) [4] regarding research and publication ethics.

Publication ethics guidelines are described as falling into categories of research ethics, publication ethics (authorship and review process), and dealing with misconduct. Since the 'Instruction to Authors' in HIR provides a guideline for authors but not for reviewers and editors, and in order to create a process for editors and reviewers to deal with misconduct, the relevant sections should be supplemented, although a general flow for dealing with this subject has been included in HIR. Generally speaking, in terms of ethical aspects, the 'Instruction to Authors' section in HIR has adopted guidelines similar to those of other informatics journals such as the Journal of American Medical Informatics Association (JAMIA) and the International Medical Informatics Association (IMIA). It will be better if other guidelines and standard operating procedures are established in compliance with ethical guidelines based on HIR ethics policies. The HIR editorial board will make an effort to implement good pub-

lication practices and to pursue a high quality journal. We also look forward to HIR members' efforts, as this journal is a collaboration, a result of all HIR members' endeavors and concerns.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

References

1. Saunders R, Savulescu J. Research ethics and lessons from Hwanggate: what can we learn from the Korean cloning fraud? *J Med Ethics* 2008;34:214-21.
2. Concerns on building up good laboratory and research environment [Internet]. Seoul, Korea: The Hankyoreh Science On; 2012 [cited at 2012 Feb 17]. Available from: <http://scienceon.hani.co.kr/archives/26820>.
3. Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors. Good Publication Practice Guidelines for Medical Journals [Internet]. Seoul, Korea: Korean Association of Medical Journal Editors; 2012 [cited at 2012 Feb 15]. Available from: http://kamje.or.kr/publishing_ethics.html.
4. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: writing and editing for biomedical publication [Internet]. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; 2009 [cited at 2012 Feb 15]. Available from: http://www.icmje.org/urm_main.html.