Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics: A Journal of Qualitative Research

Responding to Allegations of Ethics Policy Violations or Inaccuracies Meriting an Erratum, Correction, Expression of Concern, or Retraction

Approved by the Editorial Board, March 21, 2016

• When *Narrative Inquiry in Bioethics (NIB)*, hereafter “the journal,” receives an allegation of a violation of its ethics policies or notification that an article contains inaccurate information—whether willful or unintentional, whether by the author or the press—the senior editors, managing editor, and when applicable, the section associate editor will examine evidence and discuss the matter on behalf of the journal. Additional members of the editorial board may be consulted when their expertise would help the journal respond to an allegation. The journal will notify Johns Hopkins University Press, hereafter “the press,” when an investigation is launched.

• The journal will consider the prevailing guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors when crafting responses to allegations, which can vary significantly in nature and seriousness. The journal uses the terms ‘erratum,’ ‘correction,’ ‘expression of concern,’ and ‘retraction’ as defined by COPE and ordinarily will publish such changes in a manner consistent with the best practices described by COPE.

• Responsibility of Authors: Authorship serves two key purposes: It provides authors with credit for their intellectual work, and it identifies the individuals responsible for the integrity of a publication. The JHUP “Publishing Agreement” for the journal outlines author responsibilities:
  o “You represent and warrant to the Press that the Article is original, that you have full power to make this Agreement, that you are the sole author(s); that you have not previously published, or agreed to publish, the Article in whole or in part elsewhere, except as you have informed the Press in writing; that you have used all reasonable care to ensure that all facts and statements in the Article are true; and that the Article is not defamatory or in violation of any right of privacy, common law, statutory copyright, or other personal or property rights. You further warrant that your article adheres to *NIB’S* standards for confidentiality and privacy, human subject research and conflicts of interest [*fix in Permission form*] that are outlined in the author guidelines under “Ethics” ([http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/narrative_inquiry_in_bioethics/guidelines.html](http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/narrative_inquiry_in_bioethics/guidelines.html)]. The author signs for and accepts responsibility for releasing this information on behalf of any and all co-authors.”
  o Authors further agree to fully cooperate with any investigation arising from allegations of a violation of the journal’s ethics policies. [Add to Ethics policy online]
• Rights of Authors: When the journal receives an allegation authors will be notified. Authors will be invited to provide a response, including background information they consider appropriate to share. Any proposed changes to the article or actions taken by the editorial office will be discussed with authors. Such discussions may be facilitated by the corresponding author. Whenever possible, changes to an article will be approved by authors and the journal prior to publication, and ordinarily, changes will be published by the authors. However, when a change is deemed necessary by the journal, it may be made unilaterally after the authors have been informed and granted the opportunity to respond.

• When a credible accusation involves a violation of United States or international laws (e.g., data fabrication or falsification, plagiarism, or failure to abide by the rules of an institutional research board or research ethics committee), then the journal will ordinarily contact the author’s institution with the request that the institution conduct an investigation and report back to the journal regarding whether a retraction or correction is in order. For other allegations, the journal’s editorial office will use its discretion regarding whether to involve the author’s institution.

• When investigation into an allegation is fair, trustworthy, and conclusively indicates a violation, then ordinarily the author or the journal will publish a correction or retract the article. Corrections will be used when the article contains a problem in a limited section of an otherwise sound publication; retractions will be used when the problem is extensive and cannot be simply corrected.

• When an investigation is inconclusive or the process used was inadequate, the journal will consider a range of options, including taking no further action or publishing an “expression of concern.”

• Those who make an allegation will be asked whether they wish to remain anonymous to the authors and/or authors’ institution. The journal will try to honor requests for anonymity; however, in some cases doing so may limit the ability to launch an investigation, which requires presenting an author with evidence. Similarly, the investigation process and outcomes may be confidential, and those making allegations ordinarily will receive no communication that is not made publicly available. In no case are those making allegations allowed to dictate either the process or changes articles, which can only be made by authors or by the journal following investigation and dialogue with authors.

• Following investigation and dialogue with authors, the journal will notify the press of the outcome and may request publication of an erratum, correction, expression of concern, or retraction. Upon request, the journal will provide the press with evidence supporting the recommendation.