#### "VERDUCI EDITORE POLICY"

#### **Open Access Policy**

All research articles published in our journals are fully open access and immediately **freely accessible**. Articles are posted online as soon as they have completed the production process in a **fully citable** form associated with a universal **digital object identifier** (**DOI**). Articles are published under the terms of a **Creative Commons license** and can be freely downloaded from our website without need for journal subscription and/or login.

A complete version of the article and related supplementary material (including a copy of the permission, as stated above) is deposited in **CLOCKSS** repository in a suitable standard electronic format immediately after the publication in any of our journals.

## Editorial process and peer review

All contributions are initially handled by the Editor-in-Chief (or by a handling Editor on behalf of the Editor-in-Chief), who conducts the first assessment of the manuscript by verifying whether it falls within the aims and scope of the journal. The subsequent decision may be peer-reviewing or rejecting the manuscript. Only the manuscripts that meet our editorial criteria pass this first step and undergo external and internal peer review. Papers judged by the handling Editor as weak or otherwise inappropriate are rejected without undergoing further external peer review (although this decision may be based on informal advice from experts in the field). After this step, the Editor-in-Chief or the Managing Editor assigns the manuscript to 2-4 internal and external peer reviewers. In order to be eligible for the peer review of the manuscript, reviewers must confirm that they did not co-author articles with one or more of the authors of the manuscript during the last 5 years, that they are affiliated with institutions different from those of the authors and that they do not have any conflict of interest in relation to the content of the manuscript. After receiving the comments and recommendations from peer reviewers, the Editor-in-Chief (or the handling Editor on behalf of the Editor-in-Chief) makes another evaluation of the manuscript based on the reviewers' comments and retains final authority to either allow for manuscript revision or to reject the manuscript. In the final editorial decision, Editors evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments raised by each reviewer and of the authors' replies. Editors may also take into account additional information which is not available to either party. Editors may also reassign the revised manuscript to additional reviewers (who were not involved in the first review) for further evaluation, particularly when reviewers disagree with each other, or when they may have misunderstood or misinterpreted crucial points of the manuscripts. Reviewers should bear in mind that manuscripts submitted to our journal contain confidential information, which should be treated as such.

#### Advertising

Since editorial decisions must not be influenced by advertising revenue, advertising is not allowed in any of our journals, in accordance with the good publication practice (**COPE**).

## Human studies, Ethical principles and Informed consent

An Ethics Committee should have approved human studies. However, Editors reserve the right to reject papers in case of questionable matters. All authors should seek approval to conduct research from an independent local, regional or national review body (e.g., Ethics Committee, Institutional Review Board). If doubt exists whether the research was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration, the authors must explain the rationale for their approach and demonstrate that the local, regional or national review body explicitly approved the doubtful aspects of the study. Approval by a responsible review body does not preclude Editors from forming their own judgment whether the research conduct was ethically appropriate.

All research on humans must have approval from the IRB (Institutional Review Board) or from equivalent local Ethics Committees. Age and gender of all subjects should be provided in the main text or in the Supplementary Material.

**Helsinki Declaration**. When reporting experiments on human subjects, all investigators should ensure that the planning conduct and reporting of human research are in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Declaration of Helsinki of 1975 (as revised in 2013).

**Informed consent**. Informed consent must be obtained for studies conducted on humans. A statement that informed consent was obtained from the study participants must also appear in the manuscript, as follows: "All subjects provided written informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study.".

Appropriate consents, permissions and releases must be obtained where authors wish to include case details or other personal information or images of patients and any other individual in their publication. This is to comply with all applicable laws and regulations concerning the privacy and/or security of personal information, including, but not limited to, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Patients have the right to privacy that should not be violated without informed consent. Identifying information, including names, initials, or hospital numbers, should not be published in written descriptions, photographs, or pedigrees unless the information is essential for scientific purposes and the patient (or his/her parent or guardian) gives written informed consent for publication. Informed consent for this purpose requires that the patient visualizes the manuscript to be published. Authors should inform these patients whether any potential identifiable material might be available via the Internet as well as in print after publication.

Examples of ethics and informed consent statement:

- 1. Original article: "All subjects provided written informed consent for inclusion before they participated in the study. This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki of 1975 (as revised in 2013), and the protocol was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of NAME OF THE INSTITUTE (project or protocol identification number XXX and date of approval)." OR "Ethical review and approval were waived for this study, due to REASON (please provide a detailed justification)."
- 2. Case report: "Written informed consent was provided by the patient (and/or his/her parents) for permission to receive therapy and to publish this case report."

Please note that photographs of patients or research subjects should not be used unless the information is essential for scientific purposes and explicit permission has been given by the patient or research subject as part of the informed consent. Such photographs should be anonymized using boxes or dots or shades covering eyes and/or other identifying details. If identifying characteristics are altered to protect the anonymity, authors should provide assurance that such alterations do not affect the scientific meaning. If consent has not been obtained, it is not sufficient to anonymize a photograph simply by using eye bars or blurring the face of the subject. Formal consents are not required for the use of entirely anonymized images from which the individual cannot be identified (e.g., X-rays, ultrasound images, computed tomography/magnetic resonance scans, etc.).

## **Animal studies and Ethical principles**

An Ethics Committee should have approved animal studies. However, Editors reserve the right to reject papers in case of questionable matters. When reporting experiments on animals, authors must indicate whether institutional and national standards for the care and use of laboratory animals were followed. Appropriate IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees) approval should be obtained and described. Animal species/strain, sex, and source (vendor name, location) should be indicated. We encourage the use of both male and female animals. The use of a single sex should be scientifically justified.

#### **Conflict of interest**

## **Conflicts of Interest (COI)**

At the time of submission, **Verduci Editore** policy requires that authors disclose potential conflicts of interest (COI), including financial interests, direct and indirect connections, or any other situation that could raise questions of bias in either the reported work or its conclusions, implications, or related opinions. Potential COI to be disclosed include any relevant commercial or noncommercial source of funding for either author(s), or the sponsoring institution, the associated department(s) or organization(s). When considering whether you should declare a COI, please consider the following question: "Is there any arrangement that would embarrass you or any of your co-authors, which you did not declare and would emerge after publication?".

As an integral part of the online submission process, Corresponding Authors are required to confirm whether they or their co-authors have any COI to disclose. If the Corresponding Author is unable to confirm this information on behalf of all co-authors, the other authors will then be required to send a completed COI form to the Editorial Office. It is the Corresponding Author's responsibility to ensure that all authors adhere to this policy. Information on potential COI must be reported in the manuscript.

## **COI** in Industry-Sponsored Research

Authors whose manuscripts are submitted for publication must declare all relevant sources of funding in support of the preparation of a manuscript. Verduci Editore requires full disclosure of financial support as to whether it is from the tobacco industry, the pharmaceutical or any other industry, government agencies, or any other source. This information should be included in the Acknowledgements section of the manuscript. Authors are required to specify sources of funding for the study and to indicate whether the text was reviewed by the sponsor prior to submission (e.g., whether the study was written with full investigator access to all relevant data and whether the sponsor exerted editorial influence over the written text). This information should be included in the Cover letter. In addition to the disclosure of direct financial support to the authors or their laboratory and prior sponsor's review of the paper, authors are required to disclose all relevant consultancies within 12 months prior to submission, since the views expressed in the contribution could be influenced by the opinions they have expressed privately as consultants. This information should be included in the Acknowledgments section of the manuscript. In the event that a previously undisclosed potential competing interest for an author of a published paper comes to the attention of the Editors and is subsequently confirmed by the authors, the undeclared interest will be published as an erratum in a future volume of the journal.

## **COI Policy: Reviewers and Editors**

Reviewers must disclose to Editors any COI that could bias their opinions of the manuscript, and they should disqualify themselves from reviewing specific manuscripts if they deem it as appropriate. As in the case of authors, silence on the part of reviewers concerning potential COI may mean either that such COI exist but they have not been properly disclosed, or that COI do not exist. Reviewers must therefore also be asked to state explicitly whether COI exist or do not exist. Reviewers must not use knowledge of the work, before its publication, to further their own interests. COI for a given manuscript exist when a participant in the peer review and publication process (e.g., author, reviewer, editor) has ties to activities that could inappropriately influence his or her judgment, regardless of whether the judgment is affected. Financial relationships with industry (e.g., employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, expert testimony), either directly or through immediate family, are usually considered the most important COI. However, COI can occur for other reasons, such as personal relationships, academic competition, and intellectual passion. External peer reviewers should disclose to Editors any COI that could bias their opinions of the manuscript and they should disqualify themselves from reviewing specific manuscripts if they deem it as appropriate.

The Editors must be made aware of reviewers' COI to interpret the review reports and evaluate whether the reviewer should be disqualified from the peer review process.

Authors who wish to publish in our journals must follow the guidelines on **Good Publication Practice** as reported in **COPE** and **Council of Science Editors**. These guidelines aim to ensure that articles are published in a responsible and ethical manner.

## Plagiarism and Other Types of Unethical Publication Practice

Verduci Editore disapproves any kind of malpractice and unethical publication practice. With regard to plagiarism or other types of unethical publication practice, Authors who wish to publish in our journal must follow the guidelines on Good Publication Practice as reported in COPE and Council of Science Editors. These guidelines aim to ensure that articles are published in a responsible and ethical manner.

Our journal uses certified plagiarism checker software (iThenticate® and Grammarly®) to verify the authenticity of articles and detect duplications from each article content online against billions of web pages. By submitting manuscripts to the journal, authors accept that their work will be checked for plagiarism from previously published articles.

First, we conduct a pre-emptive investigation using our certified anti-plagiarism software. Articles that represent suspected case of plagiarism or other unethical practices undergo a careful check for accuracy by the reviewer(s) and Editors. Our anti-plagiarism software, however, is not able to identify the so-called "salami slicing". Therefore, it is imperative that each case is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. We do not advocate the use of one statement of actions to penalize the offender. Each case is considered separately and, as Editors, we will need to decide if the suspected case of plagiarism or unethical publication practice is a deliberate action on the part of the author or it is due to lack of understanding of the requirements of ethical writing. This can happen for new authors or some authors for whom English translation is difficult. An example of this is when there are no words/phrases in the author specific language that properly translate into English.

# **Corrections, Retractions, and Expressions of Concern (EOC)**

**Verduci Editore** requires to follow the guidelines on **Good Publication Practice** as reported in **COPE** and **Council of Science Editors.** Corrections/Erratum, Expressions of Concern, and Retractions are issued to avoid unethical publication practices.

Corrections/Erratum. If an article presents problems in data or content, this may be best rectified by a correction and/or erratum. In this case, authors have to contact the Editor of the Journal, who will evaluate the impact of the change and decide on the appropriate procedure.

**Expressions of Concern (EOC).** If there is evidence that the findings are unreliable, or if the Journal receives questionable evidence of research or publication misconduct, an EOC should be issued. EOCs have to be linked to the article and state the reasons for the concern. If more evidence becomes available, the EOC can be replaced by a retraction notice.

**Retractions.** If the article reports seriously flawed and erroneous content data, retractions may be used to alert readers in cases of plagiarism, copyright infringement, reuse of material without authorization, research misconduct, or some other related issues.

The authors have to provide a statement of retraction which will be included in the retraction announcement. In addition, a watermark will be added to each page, saying that the article is retracted.