Author’s response to reviews

Title: A 10-year follow up of publishing ethics in China: What is new and what is unchanged

Authors:
Katrina Bramstedt (txbioethics@yahoo.com)
Jun Xu (junathon@gmail.com)

Version: 1 Date: 02 Aug 2019

Author’s response to reviews:

31 July 2019
Dear Editor,

Thank you for allowing us to submit a revised paper. Below are the responses to the helpful peer reviewers (yellow highlights are added to the manuscript accordingly):

Reviewer #1:

How were the policies analyzed and classified? We have clarified this in the paper – aligns with prior study method.

Did two researchers independently read and classify the policies? We have clarified this in the paper – aligns with prior study method.

Did they disagree on any classifications? no

How were disagreements resolved? na

Reviewer #2:

“It would also be interesting looking at the actual practices of publishing in the journals, not only journal policies. The authors state that the journals in the study were chosen because they published articles on transplantation. Could it be accepted that these practices changed over time? It would be interesting to see how authors addressed the ethical issues related to transplantation in their articles and whether there was change over time. I understand that that
may be outside of the scope of the paper, but this has to be mentioned as a limitation to the study.”

Absolutely we agree with the reviewer – this is important but a separate paper all-together, not part of this paper. The reviewer might have accidently missed our comment in the last para of the paper: “Noting that most of the Chinese journals in our study did improve their general publishing ethics requirement, an important question arises: Are these journals upholding their newly adopted general publishing ethics requirements or operating with business as usual? We pose a future study to address this.”

1. Abstract: as there were 11 journals, there is not point in calculating percentages - raw numbers are fine. We deleted the percentages from the abstract.

2. Methods: the journals in the study were identified in a prior study, which is referenced, but it would be useful to describe this in more detail, so that the readers can understand the rationale for their choice. Great suggestion! We have added a new sentence to introduce this para (and an accompanying footnote for enhanced clarity.)

3. Method: "Chinese translation was performed ..." - this is obviously translations from Chinese to English. We have corrected this grammar error.

4. It is not clear what is meant by the policy that "data have integrity. In our original study [Table 3] we refer to this as criteria “G” and define it as “Article content must be truthful/data must have integrity”. We use this same definition in the Methods section of the current paper – item 7. In line 1 of the RESULTS section we have clarified this further with some examples.

5. Discussion - first sentence - it should be clarified how ease of access can facilitate the readership? Perhaps it can facilitate easy access and visibility - this should be clarified. We have added a clarifier to the paper: “Specifically, open access [free] and English-language publishing gives articles greater visibility, as well as readability.”

6. Discussion page 6, line 26-27 - not clear which is The Transplantation Society? Global, US, Chinese?? TTS is a global professional society – we have clarified this in the paper.

7. The language of the paper needs to be checked for style at places. We have taken another look and made appropriate edits.

Best wishes, Katrina and Jun