

Experimental and Clinical Transplantation: A Commitment To Integrity, Accountability, and Ethics in Publication

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Abstract

For the past few years, the social, economic, and political issues surrounding the field of organ transplantation have entered into many ethical discussions. Transplant tourism, and organ trade in particular, have finally received the attention they deserve and many commendable developments have ensued. The "Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism," the result of a collective effort by hundreds of transplant professionals the world over, is one such example and is now considered the universal charter for ethical conduct in the field of transplantation. The Middle East Society for Organ Transplantation and its official journal *Experimental and Clinical Transplantation* were among its first endorsers, and it is our policy to ensure that all authors of articles published in our Journal adhere fully to the rules and regulations stated in The Declaration of Istanbul and by the Committee on Publication Ethics. We believe that the medical community must

ensure that a foundation of ethical conduct and scientific integrity is maintained throughout the field, and we must strive toward this goal in all our clinical and scholarly efforts.

Since its inception in 2003, *Experimental and Clinical Transplantation*, the official journal of the Middle East Society for Organ Transplantation (MESOT), has provided an opportunity for sharing and disseminating knowledge throughout the Middle East and the world. Despite its young age, our Journal has grown at an extraordinary rate, and in just 10 short years has increased its publication schedule to 6 issues a year and is fully indexed in EBSCO, Excerpta Medica, Index Medicus, Journal Citation Reports/Science Edition, MEDLINE, and Science Citation Index Expanded.

As outlined in the Journal and on the Journal's Web site, "The Journal expects that all procedures and studies involving human subjects have been reviewed by the appropriate ethics committee and have therefore been performed in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in *The Helsinki Declaration*¹ as well as *The Declaration of Istanbul on Organ Trafficking and Transplant Tourism*.² Manuscripts must contain a statement to this effect." As a peer-reviewed international publication, each submission is first seen and approved for review by the Editor-in-Chief, who then assigns a minimum of 2 peer reviewers to assess the article and send their feedback. Any article that does not conform to these rules is rejected without further consideration.

Authors also are required to complete and sign a mandatory ethical disclosure form, stating that they have not been involved in commercial transactions or other unethical practices in obtaining donor organs, and that no organs or tissues from executed prisoners have been used in their research.

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Many prominent members of the MESOT were instrumental in drafting, promoting, and adopting The Declaration, and continue to serve on its board, The Declaration of Istanbul Custodian group. The MESOT and *Experimental and Clinical Transplantation* have endorsed The Declaration and require all society members and submitting authors to abide by its principles.

We hope that an increase in such policies will help to underscore the importance of ethical issues in the field of transplantation. It is not a foolproof method, as evidenced by the retraction notices published in this issue of *Experimental and Clinical Transplantation* of articles that did not conform to the guidelines laid down by The Declaration of Istanbul and that, despite our best efforts to identify ethical misconduct, were published in past issues.

Our Society and the Journal will continue to condemn all acts of ethical misconduct that sacrifice integrity and honesty in scientific research, and that above all, compromise patient safety and well-being. It is imperative that we state, on behalf of the

Editorial Board of *Experimental and Clinical Transplantation*, that we will not accept any submissions that are in conflict with the guidelines of The Declaration of Istanbul, the Helsinki Declaration, and the Committee on Publication Ethics, and we will retract any published materials that are shown to be in violation of these principles.

Experimental and Clinical Transplantation will continue to strive for excellence in scientific publication. The dedicated efforts of the editorial staff and each distinguished member of the Editorial and Review Boards are key to such an achievement, and we thank them for their unparalleled commitment to this excellence.

References

1. World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki - Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Web site. <http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html>. Accessed January 15, 2013.
2. Participants in the International Summit on Transplant Tourism and Organ Trafficking. The Declaration of Istanbul on organ trafficking and transplant tourism. *Exp Clin Transplant*. 2008;6(3):171-179.