

# Publication Ethics

# Case Study One: Conflict of Interest

- A senior scientist is asked to review a manuscript by a competing junior investigator for a high-impact journal. He is working on a similar manuscript. His postdoc recently heard the junior investigator present the data for the manuscript at a scientific conference.
- Although agreeing to review within two weeks, he delays his review for an additional two weeks, despite promising on two occasions that he would review within a “couple of days.” He finally recommends major revision and requests several new experiments that will take many months to complete. The editor agrees and makes the decision of major revision, although the other reviewer recommended only minor revision.
- The senior investigator and his postdoc then submit their work to another high-impact journal. It appears online as a preprint 2 months later. They fail to cite the work of the junior investigator, although they were well aware of it.

# Question 1:

## What are the ethical concerns?

- A senior scientist is asked to review a manuscript by a competing junior investigator for a high-impact journal. He has a similar manuscript that he is working on, and his postdoc recently heard the junior investigator present the data for the manuscript at a scientific conference.
- Although agreeing to review within two weeks, he fails to do so, and he delays his review for an additional two weeks, despite promising the editorial office on two occasions after the deadline passed that he would review within a “couple of days.” In his review, he recommends major revision and suggests that the authors conduct several more experiments that will take many months to complete. The editor agrees with this recommendation and makes the decision of major revision, although the other reviewer recommended only minor revision.
- The senior investigator and his postdoc then submit their work to another high-impact journal. It appears online as a preprint 2 months later; they fail to cite the work of the junior investigator, although they were well aware of it.

# Question 2:

## Should the junior scientist take some sort of action?

- A senior scientist is asked to review a manuscript by a competing junior investigator for a high-impact journal. He has a similar manuscript that he is working on, and his postdoc recently heard the junior investigator present the data for the manuscript at a scientific conference.
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- The senior investigator and his postdoc then submit their work to another high-impact journal. It appears online as a preprint 2 months later; they fail to cite the work of the junior investigator, although they were well aware of it.

# Question 3:

**If so, is the editor required to take action? Could the editor have done anything differently during the review/decision process?**

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- The senior investigator and his postdoc then submit their work to another high-impact journal. It appears online as a preprint 2 months later; they fail to cite the work of the junior investigator, although they were well aware of it.

# Question 4:

## **Did the senior investigator do anything inappropriate, and is any action by him/her now required?**

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# Case Study Two: Plagiarism

- A postdoc leaves the laboratory and takes a full-time teaching position because the PI has no other funding to support her. Because she has a heavy teaching load, she has not been able to find the time to write up her manuscript. When she was in the lab, she designed the fellowship project, wrote the proposal to support it, and worked on the project for 3 years with her PI's advice and guidance.
- Two years after leaving the lab, a paper appears in a prestigious journal that consists solely of the data that she collected, but her name is neither listed as an author nor in the acknowledgements. The paper has four authors: the first author is a graduate student who joined the lab just after she left to take the teaching position.
- The next two authors are also graduate students who were in the lab concurrently with her but did not participate in her research. The last author is the PI of the lab. On submission of the manuscript, all authors clicked the box stating that they made substantial contributions to the manuscript to justify authorship.

# Question 1:

## What are the ethical concerns?

- A postdoc leaves the laboratory and takes a full-time teaching position because the PI of the lab has no other funding to support her. Because of her heavy teaching load, she has not been able to find the time to write up her manuscript. When she was in the lab, she designed the fellowship project, wrote the proposal to support it, and worked on the project for 3 years with her PI's advice and guidance.
- Two years after leaving the lab, a paper appears in a prestigious journal that consists solely of the data that she collected, but her name is neither listed as an author nor in the acknowledgements. The paper has four authors: the first author is a graduate student who joined the lab just after she left to take the teaching position.
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# Question 2:

## **What should the postdoc do? Does she have any responsibility for the current situation?**

- A postdoc leaves the laboratory and takes a full-time teaching position because the PI of the lab has no other funding to support her. Because of her heavy teaching load, she has not been able to find the time to write up her manuscript. When she was in the lab, she designed the fellowship project, wrote the proposal to support it, and worked on the project for 3 years with her PI's advice and guidance.
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# Question 3:

## How has the PI acted unethically; what could he/she do to correct the situation?

- A postdoc leaves the laboratory and takes a full-time teaching position because the PI of the lab has no other funding to support her. Because of her heavy teaching load, she has not been able to find the time to write up her manuscript. When she was in the lab, she designed the fellowship project, wrote the proposal to support it, and worked on the project for 3 years with her PI's advice and guidance.
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# Question 4:

## **Did the graduate students who agreed to be authors act appropriately?**

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# Question 5:

**Does writing alone justify authorship?**

