

## Publishing Research on Publishing

*Moderator:*

**Ana Marusic**

*Croatian Medical Journal*  
Zagreb, Croatia

*Speakers:*

**Annette Flanagan**

*Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*  
Chicago, Illinois

**Mary Scheetz**

Office of Research Integrity  
US Department of Health and  
Human Services  
Rockville, Maryland

**Elizabeth N Blalock**

*Journal of Investigative Dermatology*  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**Barbara Gastel**

Texas A&M University  
College Station, Texas

*Reporter:*

**Jo Ann M Eliason**

*Journal of Neurosurgery Publishing Group*  
Charlottesville, Virginia

Ana Marusic opened the session by reporting findings of a December 2005 World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) member survey. Many editors conduct studies of their own journals and publish them; many others want to publish the findings but have found few available venues.

Mary Scheetz discussed research on research integrity and scientific publication. She cited cases of data fabrication perpetrated by Poehlman of the University of Vermont, the Korean researcher Hwang, and the Norwegian researcher Sudbø. In addition to defrauding their institutions and funding agencies, those scientists disseminated their spurious findings in prestigious journals, such as *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Science*, and *The Lancet*.

Scheetz cited factors that affect research

integrity, such as scientists' training and employment pressures. She mentioned a study in which only 50% of surveyed post-doctoral fellows funded by the National Institutes of Health were aware of guidelines on authorship and publication practices.<sup>1</sup> In another survey, 5% of authors were aware of fabricated data in studies in which they participated, and 1% reported that the published papers misrepresented the results.<sup>2</sup>

Annette Flanagan described the *Journal of the American Medical Association's* (JAMA's) experience with the Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication ([www.jama-peer.org](http://www.jama-peer.org)). Five congresses have been held: in Chicago (1989, 1993, and 2005), Prague (1997), and Barcelona (2001). Fifty research abstracts were submitted for the first congress; the number has steadily grown, reaching 230 at the fifth congress. As abstract submissions have increased, so too have the articles on peer review cited in PubMed: from zero in 1986 to 300 in 2003.

Scheetz mentioned the upcoming 2006 Research Conference on Research Integrity, in Tampa in December ([ori.dhhs.gov/conferences/upcoming\\_conf.shtml](http://ori.dhhs.gov/conferences/upcoming_conf.shtml)). She also described the Research on Research Integrity Grant Program, in which the Office of Research Integrity has partnered with several other Department of Health and Human Services agencies to encourage research on institutions, processes, and values that influence integrity in research.

Elizabeth N Blalock spoke of her experience in conducting research on publishing. To reduce potential bias during review, the *Journal of Investigative Dermatology (JID)* lets authors suggest or exclude external reviewers. Blalock and her colleagues investigated whether authors' preferences about reviewers affected manuscript acceptance. They found the highest acceptance rate among papers submitted by authors who both suggested and excluded potential reviewers. Exclusion of reviewers alone significantly increased acceptance. Suggesting reviewers alone had no significant effect. Blalock

and her colleagues submitted their study to other journals but received rejections. Their study was published as an editorial in *JID*.<sup>3</sup>

A major difficulty lies in identifying where to publish such research. Many journals find the research interesting but do not view themselves as appropriate venues. For several years, *JAMA* assisted the Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication by relaxing its standards for publication; however, with a current acceptance rate of 6%, it can no longer favor these reports over other high-quality papers.

Barbara Gastel, editor of *Science Editor*, offered this periodical as a place to publish research on publishing. She gave examples of scientific, historical, and journalistic research published here. She also provided guidelines for submission: Authors should follow the CSE style manual, use citation-sequence format for references, and submit papers by e-mail. If a paper presents historical or journalistic research, the author should consult Gastel before submission. Journalistic research submitted generally should draw on both the literature and interviews.

Other journals that publish research on publishing include *Science and Engineering Ethics*, *Learned Publishing*, *Accountability in Research*, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, *Scientometrics*, and *European Science Editing*. Alternatives posed by WAME survey respondents included publishing research electronically on Web sites of journals or of groups interested in these issues. 

### References

1. Barrett KA, Funk CL, Macrina FL. Awareness of publication guidelines and the responsible conduct of research. *Account Res* 2005;12:193-206.
2. Gardner W, Lidz CW, Hartwig KC. Authors' reports about research integrity problems in clinical trials. *Contemp Clin Trials* 2005;26:244-251.
3. Goldsmith LA, Blalock EN, Bobkova H, Hall RP 3rd. Picking your peers. *J Invest Dermatol* 2006;126:1429-1430.