**Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement for Croatian Nursing Journal**

The Croatian Nursing Journal, a biannual publication implementing a double-blind peer review, is dedicated to the highest standards of publication ethics and academic integrity. The journal embraces ethical guidelines that promote fairness, transparency, and accountability in all publication aspects. These guidelines, based on principles of integrity in research, fairness in peer review, and addressing ethical concerns, are crucial in maintaining the trust of our readers and contributors and enhancing the journal's overall quality. Embracing responsibilities for all involved—authors, reviewers, editors, and the publisher—these standards support the advancement of nursing knowledge. Importantly, the Croatian Nursing Journal adheres to the Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals (2016) of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors and to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) general guidelines for ethical conduct in publishing, ensuring that our editorial processes and decisions meet the highest international standards.

**Editorial Policy:** Each submission to the Croatian Nursing Journal is rigorously assessed for scientific merit, originality, and nursing relevance. Authors must comply with the journal's guidelines and adhere to ethical standards, especially in research involving human or animal subjects.

The editor is dedicated to the journal's continuous improvement, actively seeking feedback from the journal community and promoting initiatives to educate about publication ethics and reduce academic misconduct, ensuring our practices align with the latest in publishing. Editorial decisions prioritize the quality and importance of each article. The editor consults with reviewers and advisory boards, ensuring diverse expert opinions shape these decisions. The journal diligently addresses any ethical complaints about submissions or published works, involving communication with relevant parties and, if necessary, issuing corrections, retractions, or other notes.

The editorial board, pivotal to the journal's management, actively participates in pre-reviewing submissions and shaping the journal's direction and policies through regular meetings.

Authors are responsible for presenting their research accurately and objectively, ensuring data integrity, originality, and proper citation while avoiding plagiarism and properly acknowledging sources.

When authors identify significant errors in their published work, they must promptly inform the editor or publisher. The journal is equally committed to rectifying such issues, and maintaining the accuracy and integrity of the published content.

**Peer Review Process:** The Croatian Nursing Journal's peer review process, anchored in ensuring quality and integrity, begins with an initial assessment by the Editor-in-Chief and proceeds to a detailed review by at least two independent field experts. This double-blind review ensures unbiased evaluation, focusing solely on the manuscript's intellectual content without regard to the authors' attributes.

In line with COPE’s Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors, the journal upholds the highest ethical standards in its review process. Fair play and impartiality are key, with the editor and reviewers avoiding any conflicts of interest and ensuring that manuscripts are evaluated solely based on their academic merit.

The process also emphasizes the importance of promptness and responsibility from reviewers. Reviewers are expected to notify the editor if unable to review a manuscript on time and to treat all manuscripts as confidential documents.

The peer review process at the Croatian Nursing Journal is integral to the journal's commitment to academic excellence, combining rigorous evaluation, ethical standards, and confidentiality to ensure the publication of high-quality research in the field of nursing.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality is a fundamental principle in academic publishing and is strictly observed in the Croatian Nursing Journal, influenced by various guidelines. The editorial team, including the Editor-In-Chief, Assistant Editor-In-Chief, and editorial staff, uphold the confidentiality of submitted manuscripts. Information about these manuscripts is shared only with relevant parties such as corresponding authors, reviewers, and the publisher.

Manuscripts under review are treated as confidential, with their details not disclosed except by the Editor-In-Chief or Assistant Editor-In-Chief, safeguarding the integrity of the review process and authors' intellectual property. The journal follows the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines in cases of suspected misconduct to ensure a fair and confidential investigation.

Reviewers, crucial in manuscript evaluation, must keep the information confidential and not share it without authorization. They should follow the Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors and Publishers, and confidentially report any suspected misconduct to the editor, who then decides based on these inputs within ethical frameworks.

**Correction and Retraction of Papers:** Authors are responsible for the accuracy of their published work. Before final printing, the corresponding author receives the galley proof of the paper and is required to correct it carefully and promptly. Corrections to published papers should be made promptly. If major mistakes or errors are found in the published version, an Erratum will be published in the first available issue and posted online.

In cases of significant errors, honest mistakes, or ethical issues, papers may be retracted. Authors can retract their paper if they discover major flaws, and the online version will be marked as 'retracted by authors' with a retraction notice added to the CrossRef database. If editors, reviewers, or readers notice issues like duplicate publication, fraudulent data use, plagiarism, or unethical research, the paper will be retracted after an internal review by the editor. This retraction will be marked as 'retracted by editor' online, and a notice will be added to the CrossRef database. All links to the retracted article will be maintained. The retractions are conducted in accordance with COPE guidelines and the journal maintains transparency in these processes and provides clear notifications in cases of retraction​​​​​​​​.

**Ethical Considerations:** Authors must disclose any conflicts of interest that could influence their work's interpretation, analysis, or publication. This includes financial or other substantive conflicts, such as employment, consultancies, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications/registrations, and grants or other funding. Authors should declare any conflict of interest in the cover letter and the paper, and at a later stage in the statement of Conflict of Interest. Reviewers are also required to notify the editors of any conflicts that prevent them from reviewing a paper.

Research involving human or animal subjects must adhere to ethical standards. Authors are advised to follow the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Informed consent is required from all human subjects, and for those under 18, consent must be obtained from parents or guardians. If the participant has passed away, consent for publication should be sought from their next of kin. Authors must include a statement in the manuscript detailing compliance with relevant guidelines and/or appropriate permissions or licenses.

**Publication Misconduct:** The Croatian Nursing Journal is committed to upholding the highest standards of publication ethics. Acts of plagiarism, data falsification, duplicate publication, self-plagiarism, text recycling, or any other forms of unethical behavior are strictly prohibited. When such misconduct is identified, it is dealt with following the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) recommendations.

Authors are responsible for ensuring their work is entirely original, properly citing or quoting used works, and not publishing the same research in more than one journal. Manuscripts are screened for plagiarism using Turnitin PlagScan software to verify originality and maintain quality. There is a strict threshold for overlapping content, with a maximum of 20% overlap allowed. Violations of these terms result in the rejection and notification of all parties involved in accordance with COPE guidelines.

Reviewers also play a role in identifying plagiarism or academic misconduct during the review process, and they must notify the editor of any substantial similarity or overlap with other published data. The journal adopts procedures for detecting plagiarism both routinely and in cases where suspicions are raised. Authors are required to sign a cover letter declaring that they have not violated any internal rules or regulations of their institutions related to the content of their contributions and that they have not submitted the paper elsewhere​​​​​​​​.

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