



Editors' offices should also be responsible for protecting authors' rights

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editors' offices should also be responsible for protecting authors' rights

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Dear Editor,

In a recent issue of your journal, the editorial regarding publication ethics was factual and impressive (Möller 2006). There is a lot of information available regarding editors' conduct and rights (Committee on Publication Ethics 2001; Atlas 2003; Godlee 2004). When the key words 'authors' rights' and 'journals' were entered in a search engine, pages stating the rights of authors after the manuscript is accepted, appeared.

In the age of electronic communication, authors' rights regarding submission of manuscripts and the responsibilities of an editor's office for timely handling of the manuscript must also be emphasized. Nowadays most journals ask for electronic submission. Whereas some journals require submission at manuscript central sites, others request that a soft copy of the article be sent to an e-mail address given in the 'Instructions to authors'.

It has been noticed that in some cases (unfortunately even with a few of the reputed journals) manuscripts sent to the provided e-mail address are not acknowledged within a reasonable time (maximum 2–3 working days through e-mail). Sometimes authors do not receive an acknowledgment even after weeks, despite sending reminders to the editorial office. In such cases, the situation of the author becomes dire. He is not sure whether his manuscript is being processed or the e-mail is not functional.

In such a situation, should the authors submit their article to another journal after writing a final

mail to the 'first journal' stating that their 'manuscript should be considered as un-submitted', in the hope that it will be read some time and the editor's staff will take the desired action?

Moreover if, as a result of such a mail, the author then finally receives an e-mail acknowledging the receipt of his manuscript from the 'first journal', and if he then confirms that 'it should be considered to be un-submitted' as he has already sent it to another journal, can he be held responsible for submitting a manuscript simultaneously in two places?

Can the staff at the editor's office of the first journal be held responsible for showing 'deviation from the given responsibilities', as in the days of electronic communication authors can expect a response within 2–3 working days?

This issue needs to be discussed among the scientific community as such a situation creates a non-cordial environment and as a result authors may refrain from publishing their work.

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