

Increasing Transparency in Editorial Practices and Process at the *International Journal of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork*

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Potential for conflict of interest can arise when a journal publishes an article that is authored by one of the journal's editors. In this issue, *IJTMB* is publishing a practice piece titled "A Series of Case Reports Regarding the Use of Massage Therapy to Improve Sleep Quality in Individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)," which includes one of our editors as an author. To improve transparency, this editorial describes how *IJTMB* processes and makes decisions regarding manuscripts where a perceived conflict of interest could be present.

In the realm of Academia and Scientific publishing, editorial boards for scientific journals are typically staffed by those who are considered experts in the field with research areas covered by the aims and scope of the journal. One measure of expertise in a field is prior publication in scientific journals, which can often include publication with the journal for which they will later become an editor. This is the case with both the *Journal* section editors, as well as me, the Executive Editor/Editor-in-Chief. Publishing in a journal prior to becoming involved with manuscript review and acceptance or rejection is not a conflict of interest. Indeed, it is seen as an expectation within the scientific publication world, as editors must have established expertise prior to becoming editors.

In many instances, journal editors are also academics who continue to pursue research projects and seek to publish their findings. Some journals even have the expectation for their editors to submit a manuscript annually. That is not an expectation here at the *IJTMB*; however, it is also not restricted. Our editors are welcome to submit manuscripts to the *Journal* whenever they feel that their manuscript is a good fit for the *IJTMB* based upon the

publication's Aims and Scope. This situation brings us to a potential for a conflict of interest as it could appear the editor is "self-dealing" if they were to oversee review and ultimately acceptance of their own manuscript.

To address this issue of perceived conflict of interest when one of our editors wishes to publish within the *Journal*, we feel it is important to be transparent by discussing our process for handling this situation.

Amanda Baskwill, PhD, is section editor for the Education and Practice sections within the *IJTMB* and is co-author of a study titled "A Series of Case Reports Regarding the Use of Massage Therapy to Improve Sleep Quality in Individuals with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)," which will be published in the current issue of *IJTMB*. Since this report was submitted to *IJTMB* prior to Dr. Baskwill assuming the role of section editor, she was not involved in its review process. It would be an obvious conflict of interest for Dr. Baskwill to oversee review of her manuscript submission. For situations such as this, the *IJTMB* seeks a guest editor to remove conflict of interest and to provide editorial oversight that is necessary to ensure proper peer-review and decision-making are conducted. In this case, I took over the position of section editor for this manuscript.

When/if this issue arises again in the future, we will seek an outside guest editor to provide editorial oversight. Additionally, if/when this issue arises again, we will provide an announcement in the issue acknowledging the guest editor and thanking them for their service to the *IJTMB*.

Transparency in scientific publication is vital in helping maintain a journal's high ethical standards and it is hoped that, with this editorial, we have shone a light on our commitment to publication best practices.

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