

## Societies, Journals, and Editors

The International Continence Society, The Society for Urodynamics and Female Urology, and this journal, *Neurourology & Urodynamics* are in the process of formulating a new relationship. What should the nature of that relationship be? The journal is owned by the Publisher, Wiley-Liss, Inc., with whom each society is negotiating a contractual relationship. As the official journal for both societies, should the journal become the mouthpiece of those societies? Should it be permitted to publish articles and/or editorials critical of the societies and their policies? (If not in this journal, then where?) Should the journal accept advertising? Supplements? Does accepting advertisements and paid supplements by industry constitute a conflict of interest? Should there be guidelines, such as those recommended by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)? How will the journal deal with disputes between the societies?

How should the editor-in-chief of the journal be chosen? Associate Editors? Editorial board members? How many of each? Who should do the choosing? The editor-in-chief? The executive committees of each society? The membership? The Publisher? The existing editorial board? A search committee? How should conflict of interest be dealt with? Should the editor-in-chief and associate editors be held to a higher standard with respect to conflict of interest? Is simple disclosure of potential conflicts sufficient or must there be a detailed vetting of financial records? When should an editor or reviewer recuse himself because of conflict of interest? Should there be strict rules such as those advocated by ICMJE and a mechanism to enforce those rules?

What about editorial independence? Should there be a firewall between the editor, the Publisher, and the societies? Under what circumstances can the editor-in-chief be fired? Who decides?

The answers to these questions are not mere legal jargon; they are not abstract ideological questions; they are the stuff that constitutes the structure of the journal. For if the editor-in-chief and editorial staff are beholden to anything but the pursuit of scientific scrutiny and academic excellence, the journal and its readers will suffer the consequences.

So, how shall all these questions be answered? The process should proceed along the same general guidelines that governs the ICS Standardisation Committees—a committee is appointed that studies all available information and evidence relevant to the question such as ICMJE standards, has a comprehensive discussion, writes the rules, circulates a draft to the membership, solicits suggestions, and writes a final draft that must be ratified by the general membership. There is one caveat, though. The composition of the committee is crucial to the outcome. Its composition should follow the existing tradition of the ICS being open to those who are willing to contribute. In this case, though, it should be balanced by equivalent representation from each society and the existing editorial board. That covers all the bases.

Jerry G. Blaivas  
Editor-in-Chief

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The views expressed in editorials and editorial comments are not necessarily representative of the views of the International Continence Society, the Society for Urodynamics & Female Urology, or the Publisher.  
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