

PUBLICATION ETHICS, RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND MALPRACTICE STATEMENT 2026**Balneo and PRM Research Journal**

Scientific Quality · Research Integrity · Editorial Independence · Accountability

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Owner and Publisher: Romanian Association of Balneology / Asociația Română de Balneologie

Registered office: Aleea Dobrina no. 7, Block D10, Entrance A, Apartment 4,
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1. Statement of Commitment

Balneo and PRM Research Journal is committed to publishing scientifically rigorous, ethically responsible, clinically relevant and transparently reported research.

The journal promotes the advancement of knowledge in:

- Balneology and Balneoclimatology;
- Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine;
- Physiotherapy and Kinesiotherapy;
- Neurorehabilitation;
- Musculoskeletal Rehabilitation;
- Sports Medicine and Injury Prevention;
- Lifestyle Medicine and Healthy Ageing;
- Climatology;
- Hydrotherapy, Aquatic Therapy and Thermal Rehabilitation;
- Functional Assessment;
- Rehabilitation Technologies;
- Digital Health and Artificial Intelligence in Rehabilitation.

The journal maintains editorial policies intended to protect:

- the rights, dignity and welfare of research participants;
- the independence of editorial decisions;

- the confidentiality of submitted work;
- the integrity of research data;
- the reliability of the published scholarly record;
- the legitimate interests of authors, reviewers, readers and institutions;
- appropriate, scientifically justified citation practices;
- transparency concerning peer review, authorship, funding, conflicts of interest and publication charges.

Scientific disagreement, negative findings, replication studies and inconclusive results are evaluated on their methodological quality and relevance, not on whether their findings are positive, novel or commercially attractive.

2. Standards and Reference Framework

The journal's editorial policies are informed by internationally recognized standards, including:

- Web of Science Core Collection Journal Evaluation Process and Selection Criteria;
- ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals;
- COPE Core Practices and publication-ethics guidance;
- Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing;
- Directory of Open Access Journals transparency and quality criteria;
- World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki, 2024 revision;
- EQUATOR Network reporting guidelines;
- CRediT Contributor Role Taxonomy;
- applicable European Union, Romanian and institutional ethical and legal requirements.

Reference to these standards does not imply formal membership, certification or endorsement by the respective organizations unless such status is separately and explicitly stated.

3. Responsibilities of the Owner and Publisher

The Romanian Association of Balneology, as owner and publisher, is responsible for supporting an editorial environment in which scientific decisions remain independent of commercial, institutional or personal influence.

The Publisher shall:

- protect the editorial independence of the Editor-in-Chief and handling editors;
- provide accurate and current information on the journal website;
- maintain clear separation between editorial decisions and financial administration;
- support appropriate peer-review, ethics and research-integrity procedures;
- maintain the journal's digital infrastructure, metadata and published archive;
- preserve relevant editorial and publication records;

- facilitate corrections, expressions of concern and retractions where required;
- investigate credible concerns regarding published or submitted content;
- maintain transparent information concerning ownership, contact details, licensing and publication charges;
- avoid misleading claims concerning indexing, metrics, accreditation or external recognition;
- cooperate, where appropriate, with authors, reviewers, institutions, ethics committees, funders and indexing services in resolving integrity concerns.

The Publisher shall not interfere with editorial decisions concerning individual manuscripts.

4. Editorial Independence

Editorial decisions are based exclusively on:

- relevance to the journal's aims and scope;
- originality;
- scientific and clinical significance;
- methodological quality;
- ethical compliance;
- reporting quality;
- validity of the analyses and conclusions;
- contribution to the relevant scholarly community.

Editorial decisions are not influenced by:

- Article Processing Charge payments;
- author nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion or political views;
- institutional prestige;
- professional status;
- personal relationships;
- commercial sponsorship;
- advertising;
- pressure from owners, partners, supporting organizations or third parties.

The Editor-in-Chief has final editorial responsibility, subject to conflict-of-interest safeguards and the journal's written policies.

5. Scope Integrity and Content Relevance

All submitted manuscripts undergo an editorial scope assessment before peer review. Sport-related manuscripts are considered only when they demonstrate explicit relevance to:

- sports medicine;
- injury prevention;
- rehabilitation;
- functional assessment;
- exercise therapy;
- health promotion;
- return-to-activity;

- return-to-play;
- lifestyle medicine;
- health-related functional performance.

Manuscripts focused primarily on sport pedagogy, coaching methodology, sport management, fan behaviour, marketing, advertising, general educational theory or curriculum development are outside the journal's operational editorial scope. A manuscript may be declined before peer review when its principal purpose, population, outcomes or disciplinary framework are inconsistent with the journal's scientific identity.

The journal periodically audits its published content to assess alignment between:

- journal title;
- stated aims and scope;
- Editorial Board expertise;
- authorship;
- article types;
- published subject matter.

6. Editorial Board Responsibilities

The Editorial Board supports the journal's scientific quality, disciplinary competence and ethical governance.

Editorial Board members are expected to:

- maintain expertise relevant to the journal's scope;
- provide accurate institutional affiliations and professional identifiers;
- disclose conflicts of interest;
- protect manuscript confidentiality;
- contribute to editorial policy development;
- support fair and independent peer review;
- alert the Editor-in-Chief to potential integrity concerns;
- avoid coercive or metric-oriented citation recommendations;
- recuse themselves from matters in which they have a conflict;
- uphold the standards declared by the journal.

The current Editorial Board, affiliations, countries and available persistent identifiers are maintained on the journal website rather than in this static policy document.

7. Peer-Review Policy

The journal applies a **single-anonymized peer-review process**.

Reviewers are informed of the authors' names and institutional affiliations.

Authors are not informed of the reviewers' identities.

Primary research articles, scholarly reviews and other substantive academic submissions are normally evaluated by at least two independent reviewers with relevant expertise.

Before external review, manuscripts undergo editorial screening for:

- alignment with the journal's aims and scope;
- scientific relevance;

- methodological suitability;
- ethical documentation;
- reporting quality;
- text similarity;
- citation integrity;
- completeness of required declarations;
- clarity of language.

Reviewer recommendations may include:

- Accept;
- Minor Revision;
- Major Revision;
- Reject.

Reviewer recommendations are advisory. The Editor-in-Chief or an independent designated handling editor makes the final decision after evaluating the scientific substance of the reports.

A third reviewer, statistical reviewer, ethics adviser or methodological expert may be consulted when:

- reviewer reports conflict substantially;
- specialist methodological assessment is needed;
- major statistical concerns arise;
- ethical or research-integrity concerns require further review;
- the manuscript is highly interdisciplinary.

Peer-review records are retained as part of the journal's editorial documentation.

8. Manuscripts Authored by Editors or Editorial Board Members

Editors, Editorial Board members and journal officers may submit manuscripts to the journal, but receive no preferential treatment.

When an editor or Editorial Board member is an author:

- the author-editor is excluded from editorial screening;
- the author-editor does not select reviewers;
- the author-editor does not have access to reviewer identities;
- the author-editor does not participate in editorial discussions;
- the manuscript is assigned to an independent handling editor;
- the same peer-review, ethics, citation and quality standards apply;
- the final decision is made independently.

When the Editor-in-Chief is an author, full editorial authority is delegated to another qualified senior editor or an independent external editor.

Editorial position does not guarantee:

- acceptance;
- expedited review;
- reduced scrutiny;
- favorable editorial treatment;
- an APC waiver or discount.

The journal monitors editorial endogeneity. As an operational quality threshold, research papers involving an editor, Editorial Board member or listed reviewer as

an author should not exceed 25% of the research content in either of the two latest issues.

9. Reviewer Responsibilities

Reviewers must:

- accept assignments only within their field of competence;
- evaluate manuscripts objectively and independently;
- provide evidence-based, constructive and respectful comments;
- maintain strict confidentiality;
- avoid retaining, distributing or using unpublished manuscript content;
- disclose financial, institutional, collaborative, personal or competitive conflicts;
- decline reviews where impartiality may reasonably be questioned;
- assess methodological quality, statistics, ethics, reporting and scope;
- evaluate whether conclusions are supported by the data;
- identify significant omissions from the relevant literature;
- avoid recommending unnecessary citations;
- alert the editor confidentially to suspected misconduct;
- complete reviews within the agreed period or request an extension promptly.

Reviewers must not:

- contact authors directly;
- reveal manuscript content;
- use unpublished information for personal benefit;
- impose personal theoretical preferences;
- require citation of their work without scientific justification;
- recommend journal citations for metric-related purposes;
- upload confidential manuscripts to public generative-AI systems.

Reviewer reports containing offensive, discriminatory, hostile or personally directed comments may be edited or rejected.

10. Author Responsibilities

Authors are responsible for:

- the originality and integrity of the submitted work;
- accuracy of data and analyses;
- compliance with ethical and legal requirements;
- protection of participant confidentiality;
- appropriate attribution of sources;
- complete disclosure of funding and competing interests;
- obtaining necessary permissions;
- confirming that the manuscript is not simultaneously under consideration elsewhere;
- responding transparently to editorial and reviewer comments;
- promptly informing the journal of material errors;
- cooperating with corrections or retractions where necessary.

Authors must retain accurate research records and make relevant data available for editorial inspection when reasonably requested and ethically permissible.

The journal does not accept:

- fabricated or falsified data;
- manipulated images;
- plagiarism;
- duplicate publication;
- undisclosed redundant publication;
- guest, gift, honorary or ghost authorship;
- citation manipulation;
- peer-review manipulation;
- false institutional affiliations;
- fabricated ethics approvals;
- fabricated references;
- undisclosed AI-generated scientific content.

11. Authorship and Contributorship

Authorship must satisfy all four ICMJE criteria:

1. substantial contribution to conception or design, or acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data;
2. drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
3. final approval of the version to be published;
4. agreement to be accountable for the accuracy and integrity of the work.

Individuals who contributed but do not meet all authorship criteria should be acknowledged, subject to their permission.

The journal encourages use of the CRediT Contributor Role Taxonomy to describe individual contributions, including:

- Conceptualization;
- Methodology;
- Software;
- Validation;
- Formal Analysis;
- Investigation;
- Resources;
- Data Curation;
- Writing – Original Draft;
- Writing – Review and Editing;
- Visualization;
- Supervision;
- Project Administration;
- Funding Acquisition.

The corresponding author is responsible for:

- verifying authorship eligibility;
- obtaining approval from all authors;
- communicating with the journal;

- ensuring the accuracy of author names, affiliations and identifiers;
 - ensuring that all authors approve the submitted and final versions.
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12. Changes in Authorship

Requests to add, remove or reorder authors after submission must:

- be submitted in writing;
- explain the reason for the change;
- be approved by all authors;
- be evaluated by the editorial office.

The journal may request institutional involvement where an authorship dispute cannot be resolved by the authors.

Changes after acceptance or publication are permitted only in exceptional, fully documented circumstances and may require a formal correction.

13. Conflicts of Interest

Authors, editors and reviewers must disclose financial and non-financial relationships or activities that could influence, or reasonably appear to influence, their judgment.

Potential competing interests include:

- employment;
- consultancies;
- advisory roles;
- honoraria;
- grants;
- sponsorship;
- stock ownership;
- patents;
- intellectual property;
- personal relationships;
- institutional relationships;
- academic competition;
- professional or ideological commitments.

Authors must include a conflict-of-interest statement in the manuscript.

Where no competing interest exists, the manuscript should state:

“The authors declare no conflict of interest.”

Editors and reviewers with a material conflict must recuse themselves.

14. Funding and Sponsor Involvement

All sources of financial and material support must be disclosed.

Authors must state whether the funder or sponsor had any role in:

- study design;
- participant recruitment;
- data collection;
- data analysis;
- data interpretation;

- manuscript preparation;
- decision to submit;
- control of publication.

Where there was no external funding, authors should state:

“This research received no external funding.”

Sponsors must not suppress, delay or alter publication of results.

15. Human Participant Research

Research involving human participants, identifiable human material or identifiable data must comply with:

- the current World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki;
- applicable national and European legislation;
- institutional requirements;
- research ethics committee requirements.

The manuscript must state:

- the name of the ethics committee;
- approval or reference number;
- date of approval, where applicable;
- informed consent procedure;
- safeguards for privacy and confidentiality.

Ethics approval must be obtained before research begins.

Where ethical review was waived, the manuscript must identify the competent authority and explain the basis of the waiver.

Reports of research that do not meet appropriate ethical standards will not be accepted.

16. Vulnerable Participants

Research involving vulnerable individuals or communities requires additional safeguards.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- children;
- individuals with cognitive impairment;
- persons unable to provide informed consent;
- institutionalized persons;
- persons with severe illness or disability;
- persons in dependent relationships;
- economically or socially disadvantaged groups.

Authors must explain:

- why inclusion was scientifically necessary;
 - how risks were minimized;
 - how consent or assent was obtained;
 - what additional protections were applied.
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17. Informed Consent and Consent for Publication

Participation in research must be voluntary and based on appropriately documented informed consent, unless a lawful and ethically approved exception applies.

For case reports, clinical photographs, videos or potentially identifiable information, authors must obtain specific consent for publication.

Removing a name may not be sufficient to ensure anonymity. Authors must consider whether combinations of clinical, demographic, institutional or visual details could identify the participant.

The manuscript must include a consent-for-publication statement where applicable.

18. Animal Research

Animal research must comply with applicable national, European and institutional animal welfare requirements.

The manuscript must state:

- ethics committee approval;
- approval number;
- applicable welfare standard;
- measures taken to minimize suffering;
- justification for animal use.

Authors should follow the relevant reporting guideline, including ARRIVE where applicable.

19. Clinical Trial Registration

Interventional clinical trials must be registered in a publicly accessible registry before recruitment of the first participant.

The manuscript must report:

- registry name;
- registration number;
- registration date.

Retrospectively registered trials require a transparent explanation and may be declined when registration requirements were not appropriately met.

Trial registration does not replace ethics approval.

The journal supports transparent publication of positive, negative and inconclusive trial results.

20. Systematic and Scoping Reviews

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses must:

- follow PRISMA 2020;
- include the PRISMA checklist;
- include a PRISMA flow diagram;
- report a reproducible search strategy;
- describe study selection and data extraction;
- assess risk of bias;

Scoping reviews must follow PRISMA-ScR.

Prospective protocol registration in PROSPERO or another appropriate repository is strongly encouraged where eligible.

Narrative reviews must be clearly identified as such and must not imply systematic methods unless those methods were actually followed.

21. Reporting Guidelines

Authors must follow the reporting guideline appropriate to the study design, including where applicable:

- CONSORT for randomized trials;
- STROBE for observational studies;
- PRISMA for systematic reviews and meta-analyses;
- PRISMA-ScR for scoping reviews;
- CARE for case reports;
- STARD for diagnostic accuracy studies;
- TRIPOD or TRIPOD+AI for prediction models;
- CONSORT-AI or SPIRIT-AI for AI-related clinical interventions;
- COREQ or SRQR for qualitative research;
- CHEERS for health economic evaluations;
- ARRIVE for animal research.

The journal may require submission of the relevant checklist.

22. Data Availability and Reproducibility

Every research manuscript should include a Data Availability Statement.

The statement must identify:

- whether supporting data exist;
- where data can be accessed;
- whether access is restricted;
- the reason for any restriction;
- whether data are available upon reasonable request.

Authors should share, where ethical and legally permissible:

- anonymized datasets;
- research protocols;
- statistical analysis plans;
- analytic code;
- data dictionaries;
- supplementary methods.

Data sharing must respect:

- participant consent;
- privacy;
- confidentiality;
- intellectual property;
- applicable data protection law.

Editors may request original data or documentation when evaluating a manuscript or investigating a concern.

Failure to provide requested evidence without a reasonable explanation may result in rejection, correction, expression of concern or retraction.

23. Statistical and Methodological Integrity

Statistical methods must be appropriate to the research question and study design.

Authors should report, where applicable:

- sample-size calculation;
- eligibility criteria;
- primary and secondary outcomes;
- descriptive statistics;
- confidence intervals;
- effect sizes;
- exact p-values;
- handling of missing data;
- adjustment for confounding;
- model assumptions;
- multiplicity adjustments;
- sensitivity analyses;
- statistical software and version.

Causal claims must not be made from designs that cannot establish causality.

Exploratory, pilot, simulated, synthetic-data and proof-of-concept studies must be clearly identified.

Simulated or synthetic observations must never be presented as real clinical participants.

The journal may seek independent statistical review.

24. Image and Figure Integrity

Figures and images must accurately reflect the original data.

The following are prohibited:

- fabrication;
- undeclared duplication;
- selective alteration;
- misleading enhancement;
- inappropriate cropping;
- removal or addition of features;
- misrepresentation of composite images.

Adjustments to brightness, contrast or color are permissible only when applied consistently and without altering interpretation.

Editors may request:

- original image files;
- uncropped images;
- image-processing details;
- raw data.

AI-generated or AI-modified scientific images must be disclosed and are permitted only when appropriate to the study design and not misleading.

25. Originality, Plagiarism and Text Recycling

All submissions may be screened using text-similarity software.

The journal evaluates similarity contextually and distinguishes legitimate methodological language from inappropriate copying.

The following are unacceptable:

- plagiarism;
- unattributed copying;
- mosaic plagiarism;
- duplicate publication;
- redundant publication;
- substantial undisclosed text recycling;
- unauthorized reuse of tables, figures or data;
- translation plagiarism.

Authors must cite and obtain permission for reused material where required.

A similarity percentage alone does not determine misconduct. Editorial judgment considers the location, nature, attribution and extent of overlap.

26. Duplicate and Redundant Publication

A manuscript must not be submitted simultaneously to another journal.

Authors must disclose:

- closely related manuscripts;
- previous reports from the same dataset;
- conference abstracts;
- protocols;
- preprints;
- secondary analyses;
- translated versions.

Secondary analyses may be considered when they address a distinct question, transparently identify the original dataset and appropriately cite related publications.

Fragmentation of one study into unjustifiably small publications — “salami publication” — is not acceptable.

27. Preprints

Manuscripts previously posted on recognized preprint servers may be considered, provided that this is disclosed at submission.

Authors should provide:

- preprint title;
- server;
- persistent identifier;
- date of posting.

After publication, authors should update the preprint record with the citation and DOI of the final article where the platform permits.

Preprints do not constitute peer-reviewed publication and must not be represented as such.

28. Artificial Intelligence in Research and Publishing

Artificial intelligence systems cannot qualify as authors because they cannot assume responsibility, approve the final work or be accountable for its integrity. Authors remain responsible for all content generated or assisted by AI, including:

- accuracy;
- originality;
- references;
- analyses;
- interpretation;
- images;
- code;
- ethical compliance.

Substantive use of AI must be disclosed, including:

- the tool and version;
- purpose of use;
- stage of the research or writing process;
- human verification undertaken.

AI must not be used to:

- fabricate data;
- invent references;
- falsify results;
- manipulate images deceptively;
- conceal plagiarism;
- replace ethical or scientific judgment.

Reviewers and editors must not upload confidential manuscripts to public generative-AI systems without explicit journal authorization.

29. Citation Integrity

References must be selected because they are scientifically relevant and necessary.

The journal does not require, request or encourage citation to *Balneo and PRM Research Journal* for metric-related purposes.

Authors, reviewers, editors and guest editors must not engage in:

- coercive citation;
- honorary citation;
- citation stacking;
- reciprocal citation arrangements;
- excessive journal self-citation;
- irrelevant citation recommendations;
- citation manipulation.

Citations to the journal are acceptable only when directly relevant to the scientific, methodological, clinical or evidential content of the manuscript.

The journal applies manuscript-level citation screening. Elevated levels of journal self-citation are treated as review triggers, not automatic grounds for rejection.

A manuscript may receive enhanced citation review when:

- it contains more than three recent citations to the journal;
- more than 10% of its references cite the journal;
- citations appear clustered or weakly related;
- reviewer or editor recommendations disproportionately favor the journal.

The editorial office may require removal, replacement or written justification of unnecessary citations.

30. Research Misconduct and Malpractice

Research misconduct includes, but is not limited to:

- fabrication;
- falsification;
- plagiarism;
- deceptive image manipulation;
- unethical research;
- fabricated ethics approval;
- fabricated consent;
- undisclosed duplicate publication;
- inappropriate authorship;
- false affiliations;
- manipulated peer review;
- citation manipulation;
- undisclosed AI-generated data or content;
- deliberate misrepresentation of methods or results.

The journal distinguishes:

- honest error;
- methodological disagreement;
- poor reporting;
- negligence;
- intentional misconduct.

Allegations are assessed fairly, confidentially and proportionately.

The journal does not adjudicate institutional employment or disciplinary disputes, but will take action necessary to protect the scholarly record.

31. Procedure for Handling Integrity Concerns

When a credible concern is received, the journal may:

1. conduct a preliminary assessment;
2. preserve relevant records;
3. contact the corresponding author for clarification;
4. request original data, ethics documentation or other evidence;
5. consult reviewers, statistical experts or ethics advisers;
6. notify all authors where appropriate;
7. contact the authors' institution, ethics committee or funder when formal investigation is required;
8. publish an interim Expression of Concern where necessary;
9. issue a correction or retraction after evaluation.

Authors are given a reasonable opportunity to respond.

The identity of complainants and whistleblowers is protected as far as legally and ethically possible.

Retaliation against individuals who raise concerns in good faith is not acceptable.

32. Corrections and Version Control

A correction is published when an error:

- affects interpretation or accuracy;
- does not invalidate the article as a whole;
- can be corrected transparently.

Corrections are:

- clearly labeled;
- linked to the original article;
- assigned a persistent identifier where appropriate;
- incorporated into indexing metadata when possible.

The original scholarly record is not silently altered.

Minor typographical corrections that do not affect meaning may be corrected in the online version with an appropriate update record.

33. Expressions of Concern

An Expression of Concern may be published when:

- serious questions have been raised;
- an investigation is ongoing;
- evidence is inconclusive;
- an institutional investigation is delayed;
- readers should be alerted before a final outcome is available.

The notice will describe the concern without prejudging the outcome.

34. Retractions

An article may be retracted when:

- findings are unreliable because of misconduct or major error;
- data were fabricated or falsified;
- plagiarism is substantial;
- publication was redundant or unauthorized;
- research was conducted unethically;
- peer review was manipulated;
- authorship or consent defects invalidate the work;
- the article presents a serious and unresolved risk of misleading readers.

A retraction notice will:

- be clearly identified;
- state the reason;
- identify who initiated the retraction;
- remain freely accessible;
- be linked to the original article.

The original article will remain part of the record but will be clearly marked as retracted, unless removal is required for legal, privacy or safety reasons. Retraction is intended to correct the scholarly record, not to punish authors.

35. Post-Publication Discussion

The journal welcomes responsible post-publication comments concerning:

- factual accuracy;
- methods;
- statistics;
- ethics;
- interpretation;
- authorship;
- citations;
- data or image integrity.

Concerns should be submitted to the Editorial Office with sufficient supporting information.

Criticism is evaluated on scientific substance regardless of the identity, seniority or affiliation of the person raising it.

36. Appeals and Complaints

Authors may appeal an editorial decision by submitting a reasoned scientific response. An appeal must:

- identify the decision challenged;
- address the relevant editorial and reviewer comments;
- provide supporting evidence;
- remain professional and focused on scientific issues.

Appeals are evaluated by the Editor-in-Chief or an independent editor where a conflict exists.

An appeal does not guarantee reversal.

Complaints concerning:

- editorial conduct;
- peer review;
- delays;
- conflicts of interest;
- research integrity;
- publication procedures

are handled confidentially and impartially.

37. Special Issues and Guest Editors

Special issues and thematic collections must fall within the journal's scope and meet the same quality standards as regular issues.

The Editor-in-Chief remains accountable for all journal content.

Guest Editors must:

- have verified subject expertise;
- disclose conflicts;

- apply the journal's peer-review policies;
- avoid inappropriate citation recommendations;
- maintain confidentiality;
- operate under permanent editorial oversight.

A Guest Editor cannot handle their own manuscript.

Guest-editor-authored papers must be assigned to an independent editor and should not exceed 25% of the research content of the special issue.

Special issues must not be used to bypass regular editorial standards or artificially increase publication volume.

38. Sponsorship, Partnerships and Advertising

Sponsorship, institutional partnerships or supporting organizations do not influence editorial decisions.

Any sponsored content must be clearly identified.

Editorial content must remain independent from:

- advertising;
- commercial promotion;
- event sponsorship;
- institutional support;
- product manufacturers;
- service providers.

Advertisements, where accepted, must be visually and editorially distinguishable from scholarly content.

The journal does not guarantee favorable editorial coverage in exchange for financial or institutional support.

39. Article Processing Charges and Waivers

The current Article Processing Charge and all applicable author fees are published transparently on the journal website.

There is no submission fee unless explicitly stated on the official APC page.

The APC is payable only after formal acceptance.

Payment does not:

- influence reviewer selection;
- influence editorial decisions;
- guarantee acceptance;
- guarantee publication by a specified date;
- guarantee indexing by any external database.

Waivers or reductions, where available, are based on transparent criteria and are independent of editorial decisions.

Editorial Board membership alone is not a basis for preferential waiver or discount.

40. Open Access, Copyright and Licensing

Articles are made freely and immediately available without subscription or embargo.

Authors retain copyright, subject to the publishing agreement, and grant the journal the right of first publication and dissemination.

Articles are published under the Creative Commons license displayed on the journal website and within each article.

The license, copyright statement and reuse conditions must be mutually consistent.

No retroactive change to an article's license will be made without an appropriate legal basis and author agreement.

41. Confidentiality and Data Protection

The journal processes personal information only for legitimate editorial, publication, indexing and scholarly communication purposes.

Personal data may include:

- names;
- affiliations;
- email addresses;
- ORCID identifiers;
- reviewer records;
- editorial correspondence.

Confidential manuscript information is accessible only to authorized editorial personnel and persons involved in review or integrity assessment.

Personal data are not sold or used for unrelated commercial purposes.

42. Digital Preservation and Metadata

The journal is committed to maintaining accurate and persistent article records.

The journal supports:

- DOI registration;
- metadata deposition;
- secure storage;
- website backup;
- digital archiving and preservation where available;
- correction of metadata errors;
- preservation of post-publication notices.

Metadata should accurately report:

- title;
- authors;
- affiliations;
- abstract;
- keywords;
- DOI;
- publication dates;
- article type;

- license;
- funding;
- references.

Indexing and coverage decisions are made independently by external services. Publication does not guarantee inclusion of an individual article in any specific database.

43. Policy Enforcement

Failure to comply with this statement may result in:

- return without review;
- request for clarification;
- mandatory revision;
- rejection;
- withdrawal of provisional acceptance;
- correction;
- expression of concern;
- retraction;
- temporary restriction on future submissions;
- notification of institutions, ethics committees or funders.

Actions are based on:

- severity;
- available evidence;
- intent;
- impact on the scholarly record;
- cooperation of the parties involved;
- proportionality and procedural fairness.

44. Contact for Ethics and Integrity Concerns

Concerns regarding submitted or published content should be sent confidentially to:

Editorial Office

Balneo and PRM Research Journal

Romanian Association of Balneology

Email: **office@bioclima.ro**

Peer-review correspondence: **peer@bioclima.ro**

Communications should include:

- article title or manuscript identifier;
- DOI, where available;
- clear description of the concern;
- supporting documentation.

Anonymous concerns may be considered when they contain specific, verifiable information.

45. Review and Amendment of This Policy

This statement is reviewed at least annually and whenever significant changes occur in:

- publication-ethics standards;
- biomedical research guidance;
- applicable law;
- journal governance;
- editorial processes;
- artificial-intelligence practices;
- indexing and transparency requirements.

Substantive policy changes will display an updated effective date and version number.

Final Commitment

Balneo and PRM Research Journal recognizes that trust in scholarly publishing depends on consistent practice, not solely on written declarations.

The Publisher, Editor-in-Chief, Editorial Board, reviewers and authors share responsibility for maintaining:

Scientific rigor

Ethical research

Independent editorial judgment

Transparent peer review

Responsible citation practices

Accurate scholarly reporting

Protection of participants

Accountability for the published record

The journal is committed to continuous improvement and to taking timely, fair and transparent action whenever the reliability or integrity of submitted or published work is questioned.

Standards and Reference Framework

1. Clarivate — Web of Science Core Collection: Journal Evaluation Process and Selection Criteria.

The current framework uses 24 quality criteria covering journal identification, peer review, scholarly content, language, timeliness, website functionality, ethics, editorial-board transparency, editorial rigor, validity of statements, content relevance and appropriate citations.

2. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors — Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals. Updated January 2026.

The recommendations cover authorship, contributorship, conflicts, peer-review responsibilities, editorial freedom, participant protection, corrections, misconduct, overlapping publication, fees, special issues, clinical trials and responsible use of AI.

3. World Medical Association — Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants. Revised October 2024.
The Declaration addresses scientific rigor, ethics review, risk-benefit assessment, vulnerable populations, privacy, consent, trial registration and dissemination of all research results.
4. Directory of Open Access Journals — Guide to Applying and Transparency Requirements.
DOAJ requires clear public information on peer review, editorial boards, licensing, copyright, author charges and special issues; it expects at least two independent reviewers and recommends minimizing editorial endogeneity.
5. CRediT — Contributor Role Taxonomy.
CRediT provides 14 standardized contributor roles supporting transparency, research integrity and accountability.
6. EQUATOR Network — Reporting Guidelines for Health Research.
The journal uses study-design-specific reporting frameworks to improve completeness, transparency and reproducibility.
7. Committee on Publication Ethics — COPE Core Practices and associated flowcharts and guidance.
8. Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing.

Publication Ethics, Research Integrity and Malpractice Statement last reviewed and updated: June 2026