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Something smells rotten...

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In recent months, we have discovered five cases of manuscripts sent to Actas Españolas de Psiquiatría that had been or were going to be published in other journals. This is a serious problem that forces the editors, reviewers, and those responsible for research teams or care units to be attentive and to establish procedures to prevent this type of thing from occurring.

This information has come to us in very different ways. One case was detected by one of the editors before the article was sent to the reviewer because he was aware of a similar work that had already been published. The journal contacted the principal investigator who stated he was unaware that the article had been received by Actas Españolas de Psiquiatría, and that it must have been one of the young investigators signing the article.

The the second case, it was the author himself who requested that the manuscript, which had already been prepared for publication in both English and in Spanish, be withdrawn.

In two other cases, appear to be communication errors. The fifth and most serious case was detected by the original author and then by another investigator. In both cases, they were persons of importance in international psychiatry. The latter has made it necessary for me, as Director of the Journal and President of the Fundación Juan José López-Ibor, to make important decisions that I would have preferred to have done with the discretion that events of such severity would require. The complaint made by the author of the original article did not receive an adequate response by the Editor of Actas, who kept the incidence concealed. Due to this, it was not possible to withdraw the article from Pubmed.

This unpleasant incident has made it necessary for me to write this Editorial, to follow the procedure recommended by the Committee on Publication Ethics, re-designed by

Blackwell Publishing in 2006 (www.publicationethics.org.uk), and to assume the responsibility as the Editor of the Journal, to seek new members for the Editorial Committee, all this with the substitution of the previous Editor to whom I explicitly give testimony of my gratitude for his work of so many years in favor of the Journal.

The five cases have something in common. They are publications made by young "investigators" who have surprised the good faith of their peers and those higher up in the unit where they were being trained or working. The pressure to publish underlies this behavior, but the desire to go through stages quickly cannot justify these events.

In the resolution of these conflicts, we have followed the recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics and the recommendations of the experts we have consulted.

As a result, we have made several decisions that include changing the Editorial Committee of the journal and implementation of a procedure when sending manuscripts for publication that clearly identifies the authors and their mutual responsibilities in the manuscript submitted.

At the same time, we earnestly request that those who selfishly dedicate their time to the review of manuscripts pay attention to this point, consulting the corresponding data bases, which, of course, will also be done by the Editorial Committee. These guidelines will be published in the next issue of Actas Españolas de Psiquiatría.

I trust that, among all, we can face the ethical problems whose origin is found in the weaknesses of the human nature, problems which our psychiatrists should be especially attentive to.

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