Human and animal rights

All research must have been conducted within an appropriate ethical framework. If it is suspected that a work was not conducted within an appropriate ethical framework, the editors may reject the manuscript, and/or contact the author(s)' institution or ethics committee. On rare occasions, if the editor has serious concerns about the ethics of a study, the manuscript may be rejected on ethical grounds, even if ethics committee approval has been obtained.

Research involving human subjects, human materials, or human data must have been conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by an appropriate ethics committee. A detailed statement to this effect, including the name of the ethics committee and reference number where applicable, must be included in all manuscripts reporting such research. If a study has been exempted from the requirement to obtain ethics approval, this must also be detailed in the manuscript (including the name of the ethics committee that granted the exemption). Additional information and supporting documentation should be made available to the editor upon request. Manuscripts may be rejected if the editor believes that the research was not conducted within an appropriate ethical framework. In rare cases, editors may contact the ethics committee for additional information.

If a study has not been submitted to an ethics committee prior to its initiation, retrospective ethics approval generally cannot be obtained and it may not be possible to consider the manuscript for peer review. How to proceed in such cases is left to the discretion of the editor.

Authors reporting the use of a new procedure or tool in a clinical setting, for example in the form of a technical advance or case report, should provide a clear justification in the manuscript as to why the new procedure or tool was deemed more appropriate than standard clinical practice to address the patient's clinical need. Such justification is not required if the new procedure is already approved for clinical use at the author's institution. Authors will be required to have ethics committee approval and informed patient consent for any experimental use of a new procedure or tool when a clear clinical benefit based on clinical need was not apparent prior to treatment.