

Editorial Integrity

I have just returned from London, where I attended a meeting of the International Academy of Nursing Editors. This annual meeting is devoted to issues with which editors of nursing journals frequently grapple. Editors, managing editors, associate editors, and publication professionals from the United States and abroad attended, presented papers, and engaged in discussions on a variety of topics.

This year's meeting was hosted by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), which publishes a number of journals, including *Nursing Standard*. Presentations included a keynote address titled "Money, Messages and Messes: Nursing Journals in an Information Age" by *American Journal of Nursing* Editor-in-Chief Diana J. Mason, RN, PhD, FAAN; "Sponsorship and Editorial Integrity: Developing Successful Relationships With Sponsors Without Compromising Editorial Standards" by Laura Downes, special projects manager of RCN Publishing; and "Ethical Issues for Nursing Editors" by Margaret Comerford Freda, EdD, RN, CHES, FAAN, editor of the *American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing*.

I presented a paper on "Ghostwriting in Nursing Publications: The Prevalence and Influence of Paid Editorial Assistance to Nurse Authors and Strategies to Discourage It." In the lecture, I discussed the *Clinical Journal of Oncology Nursing's* (CJON's) decision to disallow papers written by medical writers or communication companies. The issue of ghostwriting, or paying an individual to write an article that then is submitted under a profession-

My editorial is the place to discuss issues of importance to the nursing community, whether those issues be publication related, political in nature, or controversies in oncology or nursing at large.



al's name, is becoming more widespread in the publication community, raising questions such as what to do with doctoral students who hire professionals to write their dissertations. Who, then, is the author, the writer or the student? Unfortunately, an increasing number of graduate programs are encouraging this practice, which I regard as academic negligence. Graduate program faculty members have a duty to teach their students to write, especially at the doctoral level. I question the credibility of any school that cannot fulfill this basic competency.

Another major topic of discussion at the meeting was the recent report from a panel appointed to review governance issues of the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ) after the dismissal of two of the journal's editors last year and subsequent en masse resignation of 15 members of the editorial board. The focus of the report—and the controversy prompting its creation—was the editorial independence of the journal. The World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) and the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors define editorial independence as editors having full authority over the editorial content of the journal, without interference (see "Relation of the Journal to the Sponsoring Society," www.wame.org/pubethicrecom.htm).

The importance of editorial independence cannot be overemphasized. Its purpose is to ensure that journal content is free of bias from political or commercial interest. Editors have a basic duty to establish procedures to protect a journal from outside interests or conflicts of interest, thereby giving readers some assurance that the articles they read are not biased.

In the case of *CMAJ*, the Canadian Medical Association's attempt to interfere with the editorial independence of the journal resulted in widespread public criticism from editors of the *Lancet*, *BMJ*, *JAMA*, and *New England Journal of Medicine*. As John Hoey, MD, former editor-in-chief of *CMAJ*, wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, "The notion that politically sensitive topics can be expunged from a medical journal is folly. It is also irresponsible. Physicians and their patients must have faith that professional journals facilitate a discourse unencumbered by the economic and political interests of their owners" (Hoey, 2006, p. 1983). For the full report, which makes a number of sound

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