**Journal Policy**

**Policies on Peer Review, Publication Ethics, including Declaration of Interest, Conflict of Interest, Human and Animal Rights, Informed Consent, and Plagiarism**

**Peer Review Policy**

All submitted manuscripts are reviewed through a 'double-blind' peer review process which means the identities of the reviewers are kept confidential from the authors, and vice versa. To ensure this, anonymized versions of the manuscript are sent to reviewers. Papers are first considered by the editor after submission. Manuscripts that do not fall within the scope of the journal are 'desk-rejected'. In addition, papers that fail to meet a minimum threshold for quality and originality are also rejected without being sent out to the reviewers. Papers passing through this initial editorial scrutiny are then typically sent out to a minimum of four referees (two national and two international). If one or more of these turn down the invitation to provide a review, other referees will subsequently be appointed. Normally, at least two authoritative reviews are needed before the respective editor can decide as to whether to accept, reject, or ask for a 'revise and resubmit' of the submitted paper.

**Publication Ethics**

The editorial board makes sure to monitor the standards of publication ethics. This includes having a stringent policy against plagiarism and false data, being steadfastly committed to publishing corrections, explanations, retractions, and apologies when necessary, and strictly prohibiting from jeopardizing intellectual and ethical standards. When a substantial error, a false statement, or a skewed report is found in a piece of published work, it will be immediately fixed. An item will be retracted if further investigation reveals it to be fraudulent. Readers and indexing programs will be able to easily recognize the retraction.

**Declaration of Interest**

Author(s) must provide a declaration that: (i) the results are original; (ii) the same material is neither published nor under consideration elsewhere; (iii) approval of all authors has been obtained; and, (iv) in case the article is accepted for publication, its copyright will be assigned to the *Pakistan Academy of Sciences*. Authors must obtain permission to reproduce copyrighted material from other sources.

All authors must disclose any financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could inappropriately influence (bias) their work. Examples of potential conflicts of interest include employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications/registrations, and grants or other funding. If there are no conflicts of interest, then please state this: “Conflicts of interest: none”.

**Human and Animals’ Right**

All human and animal studies must be approved by an appropriate ethics committee or review board (depending on local arrangements), and a statement to this effect should be included in the methods section or the reasons why it was not necessary if this is the case. All clinical investigations must have been conducted according to the principles expressed in the Declaration of Helsinki (http://www.wma.net).

**Informed Consent**

All authors must read the journal’s policy and the manuscript must be read and double-checked by all the contributing authors before submitting it to the journal.

**Plagiarism Policy**

As per HEC guidelines (<https://hec.gov.pk/english/services/faculty/Documents/Plagiarism/Plagiarism%20Policy.pdf>).