

# *Annals of Clinical Epidemiology*

## Guide for Authors

<a href="#"><u>Aims and Scope</u></a>	1
<a href="#"><u>Manuscript Types</u></a>	1
<a href="#"><u>Journal &amp; Ethics Policies</u></a>	2
<a href="#"><u>Peer Review Process</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Copyright, Open Access and Fees</u></a>	13
<a href="#"><u>Manuscript Preparation</u></a>	13
<a href="#"><u>Online Manuscript Submission</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Accepted Manuscripts</u></a>	18
<a href="#"><u>Contact</u></a>	18

### **Aims and Scope**

*Annals of Clinical Epidemiology (ACE)* publishes peer-reviewed, open-access articles in all areas of clinical epidemiology. Supported by the Society for Clinical Epidemiology (SCE), the journal aims to promote high-quality medical research, cultivate clinicians who have a researcher’s mindset, and contribute to address the various challenges facing medicine today. To support its goal of publishing the most up-to-date clinical and epidemiological information, *ACE* provides authors worldwide with full peer-review services by subject experts.

*ACE* publishes Original Articles, Review Articles, Study Protocols, Short Reports, Letters to the Editor, and Seminars. The journal also welcomes original articles with nonsignificant results to avoid publication bias in epidemiological research. Articles are continuously published online for a broad audience of researchers, clinicians, and health professionals. The journal is published four times each year (January, April, July and October).

### **Manuscript Types**

The journal welcomes 6 manuscript types, all of which are subject to peer review.

#### **Original Articles**

Original Articles are full and comprehensive reports describing original research. They are presented in the standard format described in ‘Manuscript Preparation’ section.

#### **Review Articles**

Review Articles present novel or unique overviews of recent or important developments in the field. They must be insightful and address the question(s) of interest using appropriate and fully presented evidence; exhaustive general summaries will not be published. Review Articles can explore several topics of importance in a broader subject area. They are commissioned by the Editor in Chief, and the journal welcomes proposals from interested authors.

### Study Protocols

Study Protocols provide detailed accounts of the hypotheses, rationales, and methodologies of ongoing or proposed large-scale studies, including randomized controlled trials, prospective cohort studies, and disease registries. Study protocols for meta-analyses will not be accepted.

### Short Reports

Short Reports cover small-scale research or research that is in the early stages of development. This includes preliminary studies with a simple research design or a small sample size that have produced limited pilot data and initial findings that indicate or justify the need for further investigation.

### Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor examine or comment upon a recent article appearing in *ACE*. As a general rule, they should be submitted within 4 weeks of the article's publication in *ACE*.

### Seminars

*ACE* also publishes invited seminars.

### Summary of manuscript type guidelines

Manuscript type	Maximum word limit (main text)*	No. figures and tables	No. references	Abstract (words)	Keywords
Original Article	4,000	No limit	No limit	250	3–5
Review Article	4,000	No limit	No limit	250	3–5
Study Protocol	4,000	No limit	No limit	250	3–5
Short Report	1,500	Up to 3	Up to 20	None	3–5
Letter to the Editor	500	Up to 1	Up to 5	None	3–5
Seminar	4,000	No limit	No limit	250	3-5

\*Word limit does not include the abstract, figure legends, or references.

### Journal & Ethics Policies

The journal upholds the highest standards in scholarly publishing.

Before submitting a manuscript to the journal, authors must ensure that they have read and complied with the journal's policies. Manuscripts must be prepared in accordance with this Guide for Authors and the

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors ([ICMJE](http://www.icmje.org)) ‘Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals’ (<http://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf>) and the [Principles of Transparency and Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing](#) (a joint statement by the Committee on Publication Ethics [[COPE](#)], the Directory of Open Access Journals [[DOAJ](#)], the World Association for Medical Editors [[WAME](#)] and the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association [[OASPA](#)]; <http://doaj.org/bestpractice>).

The journal reserves the right to reject without review or retract any manuscript that the Editor believes may not comply with these policies.

The responsibilities of the journal’s authors, editors, reviewers and publisher regarding research and publication ethics are described in full below.

Submission to the journal implies that the manuscript has not been previously published (in part or in whole, in any language), is not in press, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Authors must inform the editors if any related manuscripts are under consideration, in press or published elsewhere. The availability of a manuscript on a publicly accessible preprint server does not constitute prior publication (see ‘Preprints’ section).

For acceptable secondary publication, authors should consult [the ICMJE Recommendations](#).

If authors choose to submit their manuscript elsewhere before a final decision has been made on its suitability for publication in *ACE*, they should first withdraw it from the journal.

### **Submission**

The journal welcomes manuscript submissions from authors based anywhere in the world.

Submission of a manuscript to the journal implies that all authors: have approved it, warrant it is factual, have agreed to its submission, and have the right to publish it.

### **Originality**

The submission to the journal implies that the manuscript is an original work. Upon submission, the manuscript will be automatically checked for plagiarism. The journal utilizes the iThenticate plagiarism screening service to determine both text overlap and manuscript originality. More information on this service, and opportunities for authors to pre-screen their work, can be found at [www.ithenticate.com](http://www.ithenticate.com). By submitting a manuscript to the journal, the authors are considered to be in agreement with this screening. Materials that were previously published in any language in another journal or online were considered secondary publications and were not permitted. Note that non-peer-reviewed manuscripts posted to preprint servers are not considered secondary publications.

### **Preprints**

To support the wide dissemination of research, the journal encourages authors to post their research manuscripts on community-recognized preprint servers, either before or alongside submission to the journal. This policy applies only to the original version of a manuscript that describes primary research. Any version of a manuscript that has been revised in response to reviewers’ comments, accepted for publication, or

published in the journal should not be posted on a preprint server. Instead, forward links to the published manuscript may be posted on the preprint server.

Authors should retain copyright in their work when posting to a preprint server.

### **Scooping**

When assessing the novelty of a manuscript submitted to the journal, the Editor will not be influenced by other manuscripts that are posted on community-recognized preprint servers after the date of submission to *ACE* (or after the date of posting on a preprint server, if the manuscript is submitted to the journal within 4 months).

### **Authorship**

Submission to the journal implies that all authors have seen and approved the author list. Changes to the author list after manuscript submission – such as the insertion or removal of author names, or a rearrangement of author order – must be approved by all authors and the Editor.

Authors are encouraged to consider the ICMJE Recommendations on '[Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors](#)'. The ICMJE recommends that authorship is based on four criteria: making a substantial contribution to the conception or design of the work, or the acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data for the work; drafting the manuscript or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content; approving the final version of the manuscript for publication; and agreeing to be held accountable for all aspects of the work. Any contributor who has met all four criteria should be an author of the manuscript. Contributors who do not meet all four criteria should not be authors of the manuscript but may be included in the Acknowledgments section instead.

In consonance with the [COPE's position statement](#) and [WAME's recommendations](#), *ACE* does not allow Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT or Large Language Models (LLM) to be listed as authors as those tools cannot meet [the ICMJE's criteria for authorship](#).

### **Image integrity**

Authors may digitally manipulate or process images, but only if the adjustments are kept to a minimum, are applied to the entire image, meet community standards, and are clearly described in the manuscript. All images in a manuscript must accurately reflect the original data on which they are based. Authors must not move, remove, add or enhance individual parts of an image. The Editors reserve the right to request original, unprocessed images from the authors. Failure to provide requested images may result in a manuscript being rejected or retracted.

### **Reproducing copyrighted material**

If a manuscript includes material that is not under the authors' own copyright, the authors must obtain permission from the copyright holder(s) to reproduce it.

If a manuscript includes previously published material, the authors must obtain permission from the copyright owners and the publisher of the original work to reproduce it. The authors must cite the original work in their manuscript.

Copies of all reproduction permissions must be included with the manuscript when it is first submitted.

### **Availability of data and materials**

Authors must disclose the source of publicly available data and materials, such as public repositories or commercial manufacturers, by including accession numbers or company details in their manuscript, as appropriate.

Authors may make their own data and materials available in Supplementary Material, or by linking from their manuscript to relevant community-recognized public databases or digital repositories (e.g., Dryad Digital Repository, figshare, J-STAGE Data). All data sets should be made available in full to the Editors and reviewers during the peer review process, and must be made publicly available by the date of publication. Authors commit to preserving their data sets for at least three years from the date of publication in the journal.

The journal encourages authors to grant reasonable requests from colleagues to share any data, materials and experimental protocols described in their manuscript.

### **Animal/human research**

All investigators should ensure that the planning and reporting of human research are in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration (<https://www.wma.net/what-we-do/medical-ethics/declaration-of-helsinki/>). Authors must include a statement that the research was approved by the institutional review board (IRB) of the authors' affiliated institutions and the approval code issued by the IRB and the name of the institution, which granted the approval. Those researchers who do not have access to an ethics review committee should follow the principles outlined in the [Declaration of Helsinki](#). Authors must also abide by any guidelines approved by the authors' institutions. Where relevant, the authors must include a statement in their manuscript that describes the procedures for obtaining informed consent from participants regarding participation in the research and publication of the research.

Any data or information such as patient names, initials, hospital patient identification codes (patient IDs), specific dates, or any other information which may identify patients must not be presented anywhere in the manuscript, including the Figures and Tables. All pictures should focus on the affected areas only.

Authors of manuscripts describing experiments involving animals or materials derived from animals must demonstrate that the work was carried out in accordance with the guidelines approved by the authors' institution(s), national standards or other relevant guidelines.

### **Specimen collection**

Manuscripts describing the collection of archaeological, geological, paleontological or wildlife specimens or samples should include detailed information on their provenance and collection methods. Authors must include a statement in their manuscript describing the relevant ethics guidelines, local laws and collection permits under which the research was conducted.

### **Clinical trial registration**

The journal adheres to the ICMJE policy on [Clinical Trials Registration](#), which recommends that all clinical trials are registered in a public trials registry at or before the time of first patient enrollment as a condition of consideration for publication. Manuscripts describing clinical trials must include the registration number of the trial and the name of the trial registry.

*ACE* encourages the authors of manuscript which includes clinical trials to share their de-identified research data including, but not limited to raw data, processed data, software, algorithms, protocols, methods, materials, study protocol, statistical analysis plan, informed consent form, clinical study report, analytic code.

As required by [ICMJE](#), all manuscripts that report the results of clinical trial must include a data sharing statement with a link to the trial registration. The statement should include the following information:

Available types of data,

Available documents (study protocol, statistical analysis plan, informed consent form, clinical study report, or analytic code)

Available dates

With whom the data are available.

Types of analyses the authors are willing to share the data

Method of requesting the data.

The statement is published alongside their paper.

### **Reporting guidelines**

The journal requires authors to follow the EQUATOR Network's [Reporting Guidelines](#) for health research. Authors must follow the appropriate guidelines for their specific study design; examples include CONSORT for randomized trials (<http://www.consort-statement.org/>), STROBE for observational studies (<http://strobe-statement.org/>), PRISMA for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (<http://prisma-statement.org/>), and STARD for studies of diagnostic accuracy (<https://www.equator-network.org/reporting-guidelines/stard/>).

### **Author competing interests and conflicts of interest**

All authors are required to report all potential conflicts of interest within the last three years, including specific financial interests, that are relevant to the subject of their manuscript.

Items that require disclosure include:

- Employment, officers, advisors: 1 million yen or more per year
- Holding stocks and stock options: profit of 1 million yen or more per year, or holding 5% or more of the entire stock
- Patent royalties: over 1 million yen per year
- Honoraria (e.g., for a lecture): 500,000 yen or more per year
- Promotional material costs (e.g., manuscript fees): 500,000 yen or more per year
- Research funding: 5 million yen or more per year
- Other (e.g., travel unrelated to research, gifts): 50,000 yen or more per year

Conflicts of interest must be described in the manuscript. In addition, authors should list all funding sources for their work in the Sources of Funding section of their manuscript.

### **Confidentiality**

The journal maintains the confidentiality of all unpublished manuscripts. By submitting their manuscript to the journal, the authors warrant that they will keep all correspondence about their manuscript (from the Editorial Office, Editors and reviewers) strictly confidential.

### **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Tools/Technologies**

In consonance with [the COPE's position statement](#), [WAME's recommendations](#), and [ICMJE's Recommendation](#), *ACE* does not allow AI-assisted tools/technologies such as LLMs, chatbots, or image creators to be listed as author or co-author. As described in the ICMJE, those tools cannot be responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work, thus they do not meet [the ICMJE's criteria for authorship](#) listed above. The authors (humans) are fully responsible for any materials of the submitted work, including the use of AI-assisted tools or technologies. AI should not be cited as authors. Authors (humans) are also responsible for plagiarism including the in text and AI-produced images. Authors must disclose, upon submission and in the Methods (or similar section), any use of AI-assisted tools or technologies in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data.

### **Self-archiving (Green Open Access) policy**

Self-archiving, also known as Green Open Access, enables authors to deposit a copy of their manuscript in an online repository. *ACE* encourages authors of original research manuscripts to upload their article to an institutional or public repository immediately after publication in the journal.

### **Long-term digital archiving**

J-STAGE preserves its full digital library, including *ACE*, with Portico in a dark archive (see <https://www.portico.org/publishers/jstage/>). In the event that the material becomes unavailable at J-STAGE, it will be released and made available by Portico.

J-STAGE Data has long-term digital archiving and policy practices to ensure the ongoing availability and access of any *ACE*-related material.

## **Peer Review Process**

### **Editorial and peer review process**

The journal uses single-blind peer review, which means that the names of the authors are revealed to the reviewers, but the names of the reviewers are not known to the authors. When a manuscript is submitted to a journal, the Editorial Office checks that it follows the submission guidelines, and if there are serious deficiencies, the Editorial Office reports them to the authors. When approved, the manuscript is assigned to the Editor in Chief, who performs the initial screening. Manuscripts that do not fit the journal's scope or are not deemed suitable for publication are rejected without review. For the remaining manuscripts, the Editor in Chief selects a handling editor who then selects two or three external reviewers. In principle, more than one reviewer will assess the manuscript within 14 days, based on *ACE's* Role of Peer Review Checklist. Reviewers are selected on the basis of their expertise, reputation, and previous experience as peer reviewers.

Upon receipt of the report from two reviewers, the handling editor makes the first decision on the manuscript. If the decision is revision and resubmission of the manuscript, the authors will have approximately one month to resubmit their revised manuscript.

Authors who are invited to revise their manuscript must note the following:

Changes in the revised manuscript should be underlined.

Deletions of words and sentences from the manuscript should be noted in the response letter and can be removed from the revised manuscript.

A cover letter is not required; only a response letter and the revised manuscript need to be submitted.

The Editor may send revised manuscripts to peer reviewers for their feedback or may use his or her own judgment to assess how closely the authors have followed the Editor's and the reviewers' comments on the original manuscript.

The Editor then makes a recommendation to the Editor in Chief regarding the suitability of the manuscript for publication. The Editor in Chief is responsible for making the final decision regarding each manuscript. The journal aims to reach a final decision on publication within 10–12 weeks of submission for all articles.

The members of the Editorial Board act in advisory roles, providing feedback as reviewers and making suggestions to improve the journal.

### **Reviewer selection, timing, and suggestions**

Reviewers are selected without regard to geography and need not belong to the journal's [Editorial Board](#).

Reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the field, reputation, recommendation by others, and/or previous experience as peer reviewers for the journal.

Reviewers are asked to submit their first review within 2 weeks of accepting the invitation to review.

Reviewers who anticipate any delays should inform the Editorial Office as soon as possible.

### **Reviewer reports**

It is the journal's policy to transmit reviewers' comments to the authors in their original form. However, the journal reserves the right to edit reviewers' comments, without consulting the reviewers, if they contain offensive language, confidential information, or recommendations for publication.

### **Role of Peer Reviewers**

Peer review is vital to the review process of *ACE*, and the journal's guidelines for peer reviewers are supplied below.

#### **(1) Reviewers should provide educational peer reviews.**

Some researchers, especially those with less experience, are still developing skills in the preparation of scientific manuscripts. Peer reviewers of *ACE* submissions should provide comments to the researchers that are constructive and educational and help the authors improve their work. Valuable comments and advice from reviewers motivate researchers to revise their manuscripts and develop their writing skills.

Reviewer comments should be based on an impartial consideration of the facts, exclusive of personal or professional bias. All comments should be based solely on the paper's scientific merit, originality, and quality of writing as well as on the relevance to *ACE*'s scope and mission, without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, religion, or citizenship of the authors. If you determine that you have a bias during the review of the paper, please contact the editor immediately.



Please note any suspicious evidence of the ethical misconducts and bring it to the attention of the editor immediately.

## **(2) Reviewers should be objective in their evaluation.**

In general, the role of reviewers is to evaluate the accuracy of the manuscript's description of the research, validity of the methods, results, discussion, and novelty and originality of the research.

Reviewers are requested to consider the questions below when preparing their review.

### **Originality**

Does the manuscript report original research or outcomes and/or valid new interpretations?

Does it contain sufficient new content to add to what is already known?

### **Importance of the paper**

To whom would this manuscript be important? (patients, clinicians, researchers, government agency workers, etc.)

Would the manuscript influence decision-making in the field and could it catalyze new research?

### **Scientific rationale**

Is the research question straightforward and well answered?

Has the content and methodology been sufficiently explored to answer the research question?

### **Methods**

Are the methods clearly described and based on reporting requirements, such as those of [STROBE](#)?

Are there any ambiguous statements or exclusionary criteria?

Are the study methods reproducible?

### **Results**

Is the description of the results sufficient to answer the research question?

Are there any redundancies in the text?

### **Interpretation, Conclusion**

Are the results consistent with existing evidence?

Are the conclusions based solely on the results, or are they overly speculative or exaggerated?

### **Limitations of the study**

Does the study have any limitations that may affect the results sufficiently described?

Are any limitations that may not affect the results sufficiently described?

## **Abstract**

Is the abstract accurate and precise?

Can the main objectives, methods, results, and interpretation of the manuscript be fully understood from the abstract?

## **Acceptance criteria**

If a manuscript satisfies the journal's requirements, the Editor may recommend acceptance for publication in the journal. The journal's requirements are that manuscripts are:

1. technically and ethically rigorous
2. original
3. within the subject scope
4. compliant with the requirements as otherwise described in this Guide for Authors.

*ACE* publishes original articles that report so-called negative results (i.e., statistically non-significant results for the primary outcome) when their objectives and methodology are appropriate, the results are explicitly described, and the discussion is based on the results. Many journals tend to reject articles with negative results and most articles with negative results go unpublished, potentially resulting in publication bias. *ACE* believes that preventing publication bias will ultimately improve the development of academic research.

If a manuscript does not meet the journal's requirements for acceptance or revision, the Editor may recommend rejection.

## **Confidentiality in peer review**

The journal adheres to [Committee on Publication Ethics' Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers](#) and maintains the confidentiality of all unpublished manuscripts. Editors and reviewers will not:

1. disclose a reviewer's identity unless the reviewer makes a reasonable request for such disclosure
2. discuss the manuscript or its contents with anyone not directly involved with the manuscript or its peer review
3. use any data or information from the manuscript in their own work or publications
4. use information obtained from the peer review process to provide an advantage to themselves or anyone else, or to disadvantage any individual or organization.
5. upload the manuscript to software or any AI-assisted tools or technologies. It is required to disclose to the Editorial Office if any AI-assisted tools or technologies are used to facilitate the review.

In addition, reviewers will not reveal their identity to any of the authors of the manuscript or involve anyone else in the review (for example, a post-doc or PhD student).

## **Conflicts of interest in peer review**

A conflict of interest exists when there are actual, perceived or potential circumstances that could influence an Editor's ability to act impartially when assessing a manuscript. Such circumstances might include having a personal or professional relationship with an author, working on the same topic or in direct competition

with an author, having a financial stake in the work or its publication, or having seen previous versions of the manuscript.

Members of the journal's [Editorial Board](#) and reviewers undertake or are asked to declare any conflicts of interest when handling manuscripts. An Editor or reviewer who declares a conflict of interest is unassigned from the manuscript in question and is replaced by a new Editor or reviewer.

Editors try to avoid conflicts of interest when inviting reviewers, but it is not always possible to identify potential bias.

### **Editorial independence**

The SCE has granted the journal's [Editorial Board](#) complete and sole responsibility for all editorial decisions. The SCE will not become involved in editorial decisions, except in cases of a fundamental breakdown of the process.

Editorial decisions are based only on a manuscript's scientific merit and are kept completely separate from the journal's other interests. The authors' ability to pay any publication charges has no bearing on whether a manuscript is accepted for publication in the journal.

In addition, the Editorial Board follows the recommended procedures outlined by [the COPE International Standards for responsible research publication for authors and editors](#) when dealing with allegations of misconduct.

Any identified misconducts are subject to investigation by the [Editorial Board](#) of the journal. All misconducts and breach of publication ethics, irrespective of its level, may result in retraction, publication of formal notice of the misconduct, and formal embargo on future contribution to *ACE*.

### **Definitions of Publication Misconduct**

Please see definitions of publication misconduct here.

### **Handling Allegations of Misconduct**

*ACE* follows the COPE guidelines and flowcharts for handling allegations of publishing misconduct pre- and post-publication. For any information that is not mentioned in the [COPE guidelines](#), please refer to [COPE's flowcharts](#).

#### **Procedure for Handling Allegations of Misconduct in Submitted Manuscripts:**

When editors, reviewers, authors and/or journal staff suspect any instances of ethical misconduct during peer review, they should bring them to the attention of the Editor in Chief. The manuscript will be placed on hold. The Editor in Chief will review the case and make the preliminary assessment. If the Editor in Chief finds that an explanation from the authors is necessary, the Editor in Chief will send the corresponding author a notification, which points out the allegation and requests an explanation.

If the corresponding author does not respond and/or provide sufficient rationale for the raised concern, or the Editor in Chief is presented with evidence that establishes the ethical breach, regardless of the severity, the Editor in Chief will refer the case to the [Editorial Board](#), which discusses the allegations, explanations, evidence, possible sanctions, and corrective actions, such as publishing an erratum, expression of concern, or retraction. Possible sanctions may include:

- official warning to the author
- immediate rejection of the manuscript
- publication of formal notice of misconduct
- formal notice to an author's institution
- formal embargo on future contributions to *ACE*.

Appeals:

Authors who believe that an editorial decision has been made in error may lodge an appeal with the [Editorial Board](#). Appeals are only considered if the authors provide detailed evidence of a misunderstanding or mistake by a reviewer or Editor. Appeals are considered carefully by the Editor in Chief, whose decision is final. The [guidelines](#) of the COPE are followed where and when relevant. For procedures, please refer to [the COPE Best Practice Guidelines](#) in dealing with complains and appeals.

#### **Errata, expressions of concern and retractions**

In order to ensure that retractions, erratum and expressions of concern are handled according to industry best practice, *ACE* follows [the Retraction Guidelines, provided by COPE](#).

The journal recognizes the importance of maintaining the integrity of published literature.

A published article that contains an error may be corrected through the publication of an Erratum. Errata describe errors that significantly affect the scientific integrity of a publication, the reputation of the authors, or the journal itself. Authors who wish to correct a published article should contact the Editor who handled their manuscript or the Editorial Office with full details of the error(s) and their requested changes. In cases where co-authors disagree over a correction, the Editor in Chief may consult the Editorial Board or external peer reviewers for advice. If an Erratum is published, any dissenting authors will be noted in the text.

An expression of concern will be issued if the investigation of an issue concerning a published article raised suspicion but does not provide conclusive evidence, and yet the Editor in Chief feels the article contains invalid results or has strong concerns that readers should be made aware of potentially misleading information contained in the article. Also, an expression of concern may be issued if the investigation requires a considerable amount of time to reach a resolution.

A published article that contains invalid or unreliable results or conclusions, has been published elsewhere, or has infringed codes of conduct (covering research or publication ethics) may be retracted. Individuals who believe that a published article should be retracted are encouraged to contact the journal's Editorial Office with full details of their concerns. The Editor in Chief will investigate further and contact the authors of the published article for their response. In cases where co-authors disagree over a retraction, the Editor in

Chief may consult the Editorial Board or external peer reviewers for advice. If a Retraction is published, any dissenting authors will be noted in the text.

The decision to publish Errata, Expressions of Concern or Retractions is made at the sole discretion of the Editor in Chief.

### **Editors as authors in the journal**

Any member of the journal's Editorial Board, including the Editor in Chief, who is an author on a submitted manuscript is excluded from the peer review process and from viewing details about their manuscript. Additionally, ScholarOne, the journal's online submission and peer review system is designed to anonymize a person in other roles (editor/reviewer) from any paper he/she has authored. The manuscript submitted by editors of *ACE* should include a statement that declares their personal conflict of interest with the journal.

A manuscript authored by an Editor of the journal is subject to the same high standards of peer review and editorial decision making as any manuscript considered by the journal.

### **Responding to potential ethical breaches**

The journal will respond to allegations of ethical breaches by following its own policies and, where possible, the guidelines of [COPE](#).

## **Copyright, Open Access and Fees**

*ACE* is fully Open Access and uses a Creative Commons (CC) license, which allows users to reuse the material published in the journal without charge or the need to ask prior permission from the publisher or author, as detailed below.

### **Copyright and licensing**

Authors are required to assign all copyrights in the work to the SCE, who then publishes the work under a CC license, as detailed below. Further details are available in the Copyright Transfer Form, which authors must sign and return via e-mail to the journal's Editorial Office.

Articles in the journal are published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International ([CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](#)) license. This license allows users to share unmodified articles, non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given.

Some funding bodies require articles funded by them to be published under a specific CC license. Before submitting your work to the journal, check with the relevant funding bodies to ensure that you comply with any mandates.

### **Article Processing Charge**

There are many costs associated with publishing scholarly journals, such as those of managing peer review, copy editing, typesetting and online hosting. To cover these costs in the absence of journal subscriptions, authors of accepted articles (or their representatives) are asked to pay article processing charges (APCs). There is no submission fee.

The journal charges an APC of 100,000 Japanese yen (not including any relevant taxes) for all article types except for invited reviews. If the first author or the corresponding author of the manuscript is a member of

the Society for Clinical Epidemiology, the journal charges an APC of 50,000 Japanese yen (not including any relevant taxes). Authors of accepted manuscripts will be invoiced for the APC before the publication of their manuscript.

### **Waiver policy**

Waivers of APCs are provided automatically when the corresponding author is from a [Group A](#) Research4Life country. In cases of demonstrated financial hardship, the journal will consider a pre-submission application for an APC waiver from any corresponding author made to the Editorial Office. Applications cannot be made after the peer review process has begun.

The ability of an author to pay the APC does not influence editorial decisions. To avoid any possibility of undue influence, Editors involved with the decision-making process for articles are not involved in any deliberations on waivers.

## **Manuscript Preparation**

For Original Articles and Review Articles, the article's subject area (and corresponding subject number) must be specified in our submission system, per the list below. When there are multiple relevant areas, two or more areas may be specified.

1	Internal Medicine	7	Obstetrics and Gynecology	13	Anesthesiology	19	Nursing
2	Pediatrics	8	Ophthalmology	14	Pathology	20	Nursing care
3	Dermatology	9	Otolaryngology	15	Clinical Examination Medicine	21	Dentistry
4	Psychiatry	10	Urology	16	Emergency Medicine	22	Pharmacy
5	Surgery	11	Neurosurgery	17	Plastic Surgery	23	Other
6	Orthopedic Surgery	12	Radiology	18	Rehabilitation Medicine		

### **Style**

Manuscripts should be prepared using the recent version of Microsoft Word. The manuscript text should be double-spaced in 12 pt Times New Roman or Arial font.

All pages in each Word file should be numbered at the top right corner, and each line numbered consecutively in the left margin of the page.

Medicines should be described using their generic names.

### **English standards**

Manuscripts must be written in clear English. Authors can select either American or British English, but the selected English must be used consistently. Authors whose primary language is not English must have their manuscripts edited for English by a qualified editor or an editing service prior to submission; a certificate of English editing of the submitted version of the manuscript must be uploaded as 'Certificate of English Proofreading'. If a manuscript is not clear due to poor English expression, it may be rejected without undergoing peer review.

## **Cover Letter**

A cover letter must be submitted which includes:

- a brief description of the aims and outcomes of the work and how and why the work is appropriate for publication
- a declaration that the article is not a duplicate publication

The cover letter should also include any other relevant information, such as applications for APC waivers.

## **Format**

Original Articles, Review Articles, and Study Protocol should be arranged in the following order: (i) Title page; (ii) Abstract; (iii) Main text; (iv) Conflicts of Interest; (v) Sources of Funding; (vi) Acknowledgments; (vii) References; and (viii) Figure legends.

Short Reports and Letters to the Editor should be arranged in the following order: (i) Title page; (ii) Main text; (iii) Conflicts of Interest; (iv) Sources of Funding; (v) Acknowledgments; (vi) References; and (vii) Figure legends.

## **Title page**

The title page should be prepared separately from the main document and must include the following:

A concise and informative title (maximum of 200 characters, including letters and spaces)

A running title (maximum of 60 characters)

Name(s), academic degree(s), and affiliation(s), including the city and/or country name of the author(s)

Corresponding author's name, affiliation, address including city and/or country name, telephone number, and e-mail address

Type of contribution of the authors

Three-to-five keywords that can be used for indexing purposes

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Each abbreviation should be defined in parentheses together with its non-abbreviated term when it first appears in the text (except in the Title and Abstract). Abbreviations should be used only if they appear five or more times in the manuscript.

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Use Arabic numerals for numbers, and separate sequences of three digits with a comma (,).

Measurements should be reported in metric units (e.g., meter, kilogram, liter) or their decimal multiples.

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The abstract should be structured. Divide the text into four paragraphs with the following subheadings: Background, Methods, Results, and Conclusions. Avoid the use of abbreviations. Word limits for the Abstract are provided in ‘Manuscript Types’.

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For Original Articles and Short Reports, the main body of the article should be divided into the following sections: Background, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusions, Conflicts of interest, Sources of Funding, Acknowledgments, and References.

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For Study Protocols, the main body of the article should be divided into the following sections: Introduction, Methods, and Discussion. Other headings may be added as appropriate.

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### **Conflicts of Interest Statement**

Authors must include a Conflicts of Interest statement, as per the guidelines in ‘Author competing interests and conflicts of interest’ section.

If there are no conflicts of interest, the authors should declare this; e.g., “The authors declare no conflicts of interest in relation to the work presented in the manuscript.”

### **Sources of Funding**

Authors should list all funding sources for their work in the Sources of Funding section.

### **Acknowledgments**

This section should be brief. Contributors who do not meet all four criteria should not be authors of the manuscript but may be included in the Acknowledgments section.

### **References**

*ACE* uses a modified Vancouver referencing style. References should be listed in the order cited in the text and numbered accordingly using Arabic numbers. In the text, citations should refer to the appropriate reference numbers as superscripts (e.g., <sup>6-8, 22</sup>). The citations should appear outside the punctuation.

References to journal articles should be written in the following order: name(s) of author(s), article title, name of the journal in italic typeface, year of publication, volume number, and page numbers (the numbers of the first and last pages). This style is in accordance with the *AMA Manual of Style*

(<https://www.amamanualofstyle.com/>).

Yasunaga H, Horiguchi H, Kuwabara K, et al. Outcomes after laparoscopic or open distal gastrectomy for early-stage gastric cancer. *Ann Surg*. 2013;257:640–646.

References to books should be written as follows: authors, title, place of publication, publisher, year of publication, and page numbers cited.



Fletcher RH, Fletcher SW, Fletcher DS. *Clinical Epidemiology: The Essentials. 5th Edition*. Philadelphia, US: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2012:11–28.

References to online documents should be written as follows: authors, title, URL, date of access.

World Health Organization. International Classification of Diseases.  
<http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/>, Accessed 2018 Aug 13.

List all authors/editors up to six; if there are more than six authors/editors, list the first three followed by “et al.”

The titles of journals should be abbreviated according to the style used in [Index Medicus \(NLM Catalog; journals referenced in the NCBI Databases\)](#).

If the reference is not written in English, “Article in language” should be appended at the end of the title, and the original name of the journal should be provided.

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Number tables consecutively using Arabic numerals (e.g., Table 1, Table 2) and include them. A title should be given to each table. Explanatory material and footnotes should be typed below the table and should be designated with superscript letters (e.g., <sup>a)</sup> or <sup>b)</sup>). Units of measurement should be included with numerical values at the top of columns. Avoid the use of vertical lines or borders. Tables should be used only when they can present the information more efficiently than could be accomplished in the running text. Readers should be able to interpret the tables without reference to the main text.

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