

# CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE BUSY COORDINATOR

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## Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) – Peer Review

### Scenario

Dr AK, a senior molecular biologist, was invited to review a manuscript from a prestigious journal. The manuscript was authored by Dr CM from a competing research institution. Upon review, Dr AK noticed 3 issues:

#### 1. Potential Conflict of Interest



The manuscript presents a novel methodology that bears a striking resemblance to Dr AK's own unpublished results currently under review at another journal.

#### 2. Citation Bias



The paper failed to cite several foundational studies in the field. The reference list also appeared skewed, dominated by Dr CM's self-citations and tangentially related papers.

#### 3. Risk of Competitive Bias



Dr AK's position at a competing institution and their own similar research could influence the objectivity of his review.

### Suggested Approach for Handling Such Situations

As a reviewer, Dr AK should:

#### 1. Manage Conflicts of Interest



- Disclose the potential conflicts to the editors promptly and recuse himself from the review if his objectivity is compromised
- Document any concerns about similarity to unpublished work professionally.

#### 2. Address Citation Issues



- Provide specific examples of relevant omitted literature and suggest additional references objectively
- Evaluate whether self-citations are justified by the research context and recommend broadening literature review when appropriate.

#### 3. Maintain Objectivity



- Provide unbiased, constructive, and confidential feedback.
- Focus on the scientific merit of the work, independent of authorship and separate personal research interests from review responsibilities.

**To Note:** When faced with potential conflicts, transparency with editors and focus on constructive feedback are essential. The goal of peer review remains to improve scientific literature quality, not advancing personal interests.

**Reference:** NHG Responsible Conduct of Research Manual Version 1.1 Chapter 4 Conflicts of Interest and Commitment, Chapter 8 Authorship and Publication, Chapter 9 Peer Review.

Images: Flaticon.com

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*\*Disclaimer: All characters appearing in this article are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons is purely coincidental. Best practices may differ between institutions. Readers are encouraged to follow their institution's policies/guidelines relating to the above scenarios/case study.*

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