

## ASHA Policy on Corrections and Other Thorny Matters in the Journals

The widespread move to online publishing has brought forth many opportunities, but also many challenges, when it comes to the dissemination of scholarly research.

In developing policies on postpublication changes to journal articles, ASHA has taken into account the needs of the many users of the journals—researchers, librarians, archivists, and indexers—in addition to those of the authors and editors, to articulate policies that can be uniformly implemented and enduring.

Scholarly publishing has a long history, so ASHA was able to rely heavily on the recommendations contained in the following documents from major organizations in the industry:

- The Council of Science Editors' [White Paper on Promoting Scientific Integrity in Journal Publications](#)
- The National Library of Medicine's [Fact Sheet on Errata, Retraction, Duplicate Publication Comment, Update, and Patient Summary for MEDLINE](#)
- The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors' [Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals](#)

As the nature of scholarly publishing continues to evolve, ASHA will monitor trends, keep abreast of the policies of its fellow publishers, and regularly review the recommendations of organizations such as those listed above. Adjustments will inevitably be made; however, preservation of the accuracy, reliability, and permanence of the scholarly record shall remain a core principle of ASHA's policies.

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One downside of the long and varied history of scholarly publishing is the variety of terms used to refer to the various types of actions that are taken to correct mistakes or address more serious publishing matters. With that in mind, ASHA has settled on the following terms for the various types of corrections:

**Erratum:** a correction of any sort. ASHA has in the past made a distinction between a *correction notice* and an *erratum*. The former was for errors made by the production office but not of a substantive nature, and the latter was for substantive errors made by either the author or the production office. In keeping with [guidelines from National Library of Medicine](#), this distinction is no longer made by ASHA. An error is an error, and its correction will take the form of an erratum regardless of its source or characteristics.

**Retraction:** rejection or disavowal of published work because of fraud, plagiarism, ethical breaches, or other such scientific malfeasance, or because one's work is rendered invalid as a result of the malfeasance or misconduct of another author's work on which one's article is based. A retraction containing explanatory information is published and bidirectionally linked, and the

original article is clearly and permanently marked as having been retracted (e.g., by a watermark on each page).

**Removal:** deletion of content from the scholarly record (extremely rare). Bibliographic information will remain a part of the scholarly record, but the actual article content will be removed in the event of a court order to do so; if there is a clear risk of legal liability to the author, publisher, or copyright holder; or if the content poses a danger to the public.

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The following hypothetical scenarios address ASHA's stance on corrections and retractions in the journals and provide more specific information on procedures to be followed, as applicable.

***Yikes! I just discovered a major error in my article published in the December issue. Can you please change it online—immediately?***

ASHA takes seriously its role in preserving and maintaining the integrity of the scholarly record for researchers, librarians, archivists, indexers, and suppliers of its scholarly publications. Therefore, an article published online, just as in print, must be considered the final, extant entry in the scholarly record, to the greatest extent possible, and any changes must be made by means of a published **erratum** referring back to and, in the case of the online version, permanently linked to that scholarly record.

Key points to note about errata:

- In print, an erratum will be published in the next available issue, will be paginated, and will have a table of contents entry. Keep in mind, though, that production cycles can be long, depending on the journal and the issue size, so the next issue on the calendar might not always be the next available issue in which an erratum can be published. However, the production office will do its best to publish an erratum as soon as possible after being informed of an error.
- Online, an erratum will be permanently linked to the article to which it refers through prominent navigation links in the online presentation. All errata also carry DOIs (digital object identifiers) both online and in print to help ensure that indexers (such as PubMed) and other repositories of scholarly articles will have a reliable link from an erratum to the original article to which it refers.

By being formally published, an erratum will come up in searches as a bibliographic record, will be permanently linked to the article to which it refers, and will communicate to previous users of the original content that an error has been found. If an article were simply changed online without a record of that change, researchers would be working from differing versions of content and indexers such as PubMed would have different records than publishers.

*I've just discovered that my last name has been misspelled! Please correct the spelling immediately!*

ASHA's policy is not to change a published article, so an **erratum** will be published in print and online. In this case, the online version will also have added to it a **corrected bibliographic record** so that someone searching on either spelling of the name will be sure to find the article.

*A colleague has recently been found to have falsified data in the original study on which my recent article was based. I request that you let me remove my article or publish an erratum clarifying this situation—my findings are now completely without merit.*

ASHA will consider publishing a **retraction** in this case, as the article is deemed to be completely invalid as a result of the misconduct of another author's work on which this article is based.

Before making this determination, however, the editor of the journal will review or oversee a review of the article and look into the surrounding circumstances to ascertain that the results are indeed invalid.

Additional points about retractions:

- A retraction generally should be at the author's request and should be a decision agreed to by all authors of an article. However, a retraction can come at the request of others, such as officials at an author's sponsoring institution upon the conclusion of an investigation revealing findings of misconduct.
- Consistent with National Library of Medicine Guidelines, a retraction must be labeled and published in citable form.
- Therefore, similar to an erratum, a retraction will be paginated, carry a DOI, be permanently linked back to the article being retracted, and will be listed in the table of contents.
- ASHA will also place a watermark on each page of the retracted article in its PDF form and will remove the HTML version.

Please note that a retraction can also be considered on the basis of an honest mistake on an author's part that renders an entire study or the main conclusion of a study invalid.

*Recent reports from hospitals practicing the technique concluded in an article in your journal to be safe and effective indicate a significant risk that had not been detected by the researchers. Consequently, this governing body recommends the removal of the article endorsing this technique that was originally published in your journal.*

**Removal** of an article is warranted in a situation in which one or more of the following exists:

- The article contains content or errors that pose a danger to the public health.
- The material poses a liability risk to the author, the publisher, or the copyright holder.
- The publisher and/or author is under a court order to remove the article.

Bibliographic information will remain a part of the scholarly record, but it will be accompanied by an explanation of the reasons for the article's removal from the literature. Removal of an article is expected to be an exceedingly rare event.