

Expanding Horizons: Policy Updates and Achievements of the East African Journal of Neurological Sciences

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Abstract

In 2025, the East African Journal of Neurological Sciences (EAJNS) achieved major milestones. It produced three issues in a single year for the first time. This editorial adoption of regulations on using artificial intelligence (AI) in authorship and plagiarism, combined with changes to the editorial process, responds to the rapid changes in scholarly publishing and the growing journal scope. This update policy addresses the growing use of large language models by authors, particularly for translating the work of non-English-speaking writers. While AI can serve as a valuable tool for enhancing language, facilitating translation, producing visuals, and conducting data analysis; it cannot be listed as an author and its utilisation must in crucial areas must be disclosed. The plagiarism and similarity policy adheres to guidelines established by the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Authors must ensure their work is original, accurately credit sources in Vancouver style, declare any overlaps with prior publications, and review their own work prior to submission. The EAJNS has invested significantly in capacity building alongside policy formulation. This includes conducting a three-hour training course for authors and peer reviewers at the 13th East African Association of Neurological Surgeons Congress in Mombasa, Kenya, as well as a 12-week Critical Appraisal Boot Camp in collaboration with other journals and research groups. The objective of these programs is to enhance the competencies of individuals in East Africa in scientific writing, peer review, and critical evaluation. These activities will enhance the caliber of neuroscientific research in the region.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, plagiarism, similarity index, peer review, capacity building, scientific publishing.

INTRODUCTION

The East African Journal of Neurological Sciences (EAJNS) has achieved important milestones in 2025 by publishing three issues within a single year for the first time. To date, the journal has published 56 articles, the majority of which are original research papers. Furthermore, the journal's reach has considerably expanded, having published works by authors from 16 African nations.

Owing to the substantial expansion of our journal, it has become necessary to elucidate the publication's policies regarding artificial intelligence and originality. Furthermore,

substantial enhancements have been made to our editorial process to improve the experiences of authors and readers and to stay aligned with current developments in the publishing industry.

POLICY UPDATES

1. Artificial Intelligence

The swift development of large language models has led to the formulation of policies concerning AI utilization in research publishing;

these policies primarily arose between 2023 and 2025 to uphold research integrity and recognize the indispensable role of these tools in future scholarly endeavours.

The editorial team of this journal oversees a substantial number of articles originating from various regions across the continent. Prior to the review procedure, we conduct an evaluation of similarity and AI utilization employing standard tools. During this procedure, we have received articles containing AI-generated text ranging from 25% to 100%. This raises important concerns regarding the definition of plagiarism and originality, as well as the veracity of citations.

The EAJNS is published in English; as the journal's reach expands across the continent, non-Anglophone authors are compelled to translate their work. The expense of employing professional translators is considerable, further compounded by the limited pool of translators possessing adequate expertise in both neuroscientific research and translation. Consequently, numerous authors employ readily accessible AI tools before submission. AI translation is permissible if the guidelines for AI use are adhered to. The following are our recommendations on AI use

AI cannot be listed as an author; this is an agreed-upon recommendation among major scientific publishers and is a position of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) (1,2).

Transparency and disclosure: Authors must disclose AI tool usage in writing, translation, production of images or graphical elements and data collection and analysis. This disclosure should be made in relevant sections of the article. AI can be utilised in the following cases so long as the recommended guidelines above are followed:

Writing and Editing: grammar checking, language polishing and structural adjustment. However, intellectual content must originate from human researchers.

Image generation: AI-generated images and illustrative figures must be clearly labelled.

Data analysis: AI tools utilised in statistical analysis, pattern recognition and data visualisation must be documented in the methods section of the article

Translation: Full disclosure of AI use is required

Human accountability: Authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity and originality of their work regardless of AI tool assistance; as such, authors must verify all AI-generated content, check citations and ensure factual accuracy in their work

The application of artificial intelligence in writing will elicit varying responses from our editorial team. However, context-dependent interpretation will be conducted, as percentages may have varying significance depending on the affected section, manuscript type, and detection method employed.

Table 1: Indices of identified AI use in writing and the possible responses from the editorial team.

Level of AI Use	Percent	Response
Low detection	0-20%	Article accepted for review considering all other requirements are met
Moderate to low	20-40%	Request Disclosure statement Request editing or revisions by the author.
Moderate	40-60%	Substantial AI involvement is likely Require a disclosure statement or detailed explanation of AI use Possible desk rejection if no response is provided
High detection	60-80%	Extensive AI-generated work Request detailed explanation of AI use Desk rejection if methods and results section are primarily AI generated
Very high detection	80-100%	Immediate Desk rejection

2. Plagiarism and similarity

The EAJNS upholds a rigorous commitment to academic integrity and ethical publishing standards, adhering to the guidelines established by COPE, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) (3), and WAME (4). All submitted articles are subjected to thorough plagiarism checks utilizing industry-standard tools both prior to the commencement of the peer review process and upon submission of revised manuscripts. While the threshold points highlighted in Table 2 are a guideline, context-specific assessment will be performed, and editorial response will vary depending on the nature of duplication, location of similarity, and type of article.

Authors submitting to this journal must ensure that: 1) All work represents original research or scholarship, 2) All sources are appropriately cited using the Vancouver style, 3) Any overlap with previous publications is disclosed at submission, 4) All ideas, data, figures, and text borrowed from other sources are clearly attributed, and 5) Written permission is obtained for reusing substantial portions of copyright material. Authors are encouraged to perform self-screening

Table 2: Similarity thresholds and possible responses from the editorial team

Similarity index	Recommendations
0-10%	Generally acceptable
10-15%	Requires editorial review; author may be requested to revise and clarify sources
15-20%	Revision required
20-25%	Significant concerns, revisions required, likely rejection if concerns are not adequately addressed
>25%	Desk rejection

IMPROVED EDITORIAL PROCESS

The EAJNS has made considerable progress in recruiting, training, and retaining peer reviewers. This aims to ensure a 28-day duration for the review process and, additionally, the journal's endeavour to enhance neurological research within the region.

AUTHOR AND PEER REVIEWER TRAINING WORKSHOP

During the 13th East African Association of Neurological Surgeons Congress in Mombasa, Kenya, the EAJNS conducted a three-hour training symposium for authors and reviewers. The EAJNS workshop was set up to improve local skills in scientific writing, peer review, and academic communication, which will help improve neurosurgical care by sharing high-quality research. The talks given in the workshop included (a) Raising the Bar for African Neurosurgical Research: From the Operating Room to the Journal Page, delivered by Prof. Nimrod Mwang'ombe, a member of the EAJNS Editorial Board; (b) Rethinking and

Simplifying Scientific Communication, by Felix Mburu Njoroge (Project Lead, EAJNS), and (c) Behind the Scenes: The Journey of a Manuscript, by Dr. Faisal Nageyle, the Managing Editor of EAJNS. Dr. Nageyle provided a comprehensive and practical overview of the editorial and peer-review process, covering all stages from manuscript submission to editorial decision.

CRITICAL APPRAISAL BOOT CAMP

Over the past 12 weeks, the EAJNS journal club brought together multiple research organisations to undertake a free online critical appraisal training program. The other collaborating institutions included scientific journals such as the Anatomy Journal of Africa (AJA), Journal of the Kenya Association of Physicians (JOKAP), Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Eastern and Central Africa (JOGECA) and student organisations such as the University of Nairobi research Club, Kenyatta University medical Research Club (KUMREC) and the Surgical Students Forum (SSF).



Figure 1: Members of the EAJNS editorial team took attendees of the 13 EAANS congress through the different aspects of the editorial process. (a) "Raising the Bar for African Neurosurgical Research: From the Operating Room to the Journal Page" This session was delivered by Prof. Nimrod Mwang'ombe, a member of the EAJNS Editorial Board. (b) "Rethinking and Simplifying Scientific Communication," a virtual talk by Felix Mburu Njoroge (Project Lead). (c) Dr. Faisal Nageyle, the Managing Editor of EAJNS giving a talk titled "Behind the Scenes: The Journey of a Manuscript"

CONCLUSION

The year 2025 represents significant progress for the East African Journal of Neurological Sciences. Publishing three issues with 56 articles from authors across 16 African countries in four years of operation, this demonstrates our expanding role as a leading platform for neuroscientific research on the continent.

The implementation of clear policies on AI use and plagiarism positions the journal to navigate contemporary publishing challenges while

maintaining rigorous standards of integrity and originality. These policies acknowledge the practical realities faced by researchers, including the need for translation assistance while ensuring accountability and transparency. The improvements to our editorial processes, including expanded reviewer training and streamlined timelines, enhance our ability to serve authors efficiently while maintaining quality.

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