



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# The Problem of Similar Manuscripts

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## Description

A scenario about how a journal editor should handle the situation when similar manuscripts are submitted to a journal around the same time.

## Body

You are the editor of The Journal of Breakthrough Research and receive a manuscript on an advance in the A area of field F. There are only three scientists you feel are expert on the topic of this paper. All three agree to review the manuscript.

The next day you receive a manuscript that is similar to the one you have already arranged to have reviewed. The methodology is somewhat different but the conclusion appears to be the same. Now both manuscripts are sitting on your desk.

How would you handle the second manuscript? Should it be sent out for review as well? To the same scientists who are reviewing the first manuscript? Why or why not?

If both manuscripts prove to be of similar publishable quality, how will you handle

publication, and what if any other factors will make a difference to your decision?

Would it make any difference if the first manuscript arrived with a note from the author advising you that there was another scientist/group working on this same discovery and requesting an expedited review process for her manuscript?

## **Notes**

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

## **Contributor(s)**

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## **Parent Collection**

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

## **Topics**

Publication Ethics

Research and Practice

## **Discipline(s)**

Research Ethics

## **Publisher**

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