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This series is committed to upholding the integrity of the scientific record and will follow the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines on how to deal with potential acts of misconduct and correcting the literature.

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- Authors whose names appear on the submission have contributed sufficiently to the scientific work and therefore share collective responsibility and accountability for the results.
- Permissions have been secured for the re-use of material (text and/or images) where necessary.
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- Results are presented clearly, honestly, and without fabrication, falsification or inappropriate (including image based) data manipulation.

In addition, authors must disclose all relationships or interests that could have direct or potential influence or impart bias on the work. Although an author may not feel there is any conflict, disclosure of relationships and interests provides a more complete and transparent process, leading to an accurate and objective assessment of the work.

Authors should include the following statements (if applicable) in a separate section entitled “Compliance with Ethical Standards” after the acknowledgements and before the references section when submitting a paper:

- Funding sources and relevant or what could be perceived as conflicts of interest should be disclosed.
- If the work involves human participants and their data or biological material, make sure to report that the study was reviewed and approved by an appropriate ethics review committee (include name of ethics committee and reference number), that the work adheres to the Declaration of Helsinki (or comparable ethical standards) and that written informed consent was obtained from the participants for inclusion in the study and for publication or specify that no ethics approval was required.

- If animals and their data or biological material are studied, make sure to report that the study was reviewed and approved by an appropriate ethics review committee (include name of ethics committee and relevant permit number) and that the legal requirements or guidelines in the country and/or state or province for the care and use of animals have been followed or specify that no ethics approval was required.

Example statements for reference:

## **Compliance with ethical standards**

**Funding:** This study was funded by X (grant number X).

**Disclosure of Interests:** Author A has received research grants from Company W. Author B has received a speaker honorarium from Company X and owns stock in Company Y. Author C is a member of committee Z. OR if no conflict exists, **Disclosure of Interests:** Author A declares that he/she has no conflict of interest. Author B declares that he/she has no conflict of interest. ...

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**Ethical approval:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Approval was granted by [*include name of ethics committee and reference number*].

OR: This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Studies involving animals

**Ethical approval:** All applicable international, national, and/or institutional guidelines for the care and use of animals were followed. Approval was granted by [*Include name of ethics committee and permit number*].

OR: This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent for participation and publication was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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