



Editorial

Keeping the Human Hand on the Wheel

Artificial intelligence now drafts text, sketches images, and mines data at a scale never seen before. Researchers reach for these tools because they promise speed and reach. Yet the same engines can mislead, invent sources, and pierce the privacy that underpins peer review. This editorial traces recent missteps, explains why the Athena Health & Research Journal sets firm rules, and invites every reader to weigh the balance between assistance and accountability.

Where things went wrong

In early 2023 several papers listed ChatGPT as co-author, even though it cannot take responsibility for the work. Months later, a biology article used an AI tool to draw an anatomical figure; the rat it produced sported an outsized organ, and the study was pulled. Image manipulation has triggered hundreds of retractions over two decades, and AI now lowers the barrier for fresh fraud. Large language models also manufacture persuasive but false citations, eroding trust in reference lists. Evidence shows that AI-written exam papers beat most human submissions and dodged detection, hinting at the scale of undetected use.

Ethics bodies draw a line

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) states that machines cannot meet authorship criteria because they cannot accept responsibility. World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) echoes that view and urges editors to demand full disclosure of any AI assistance. Scientific publishers block generative images unless the study itself analyses such tools, citing unsettled copyright and integrity risks, and require authors, reviewers, and editors to keep confidential text away from public AI systems.

Athena's stance

The journal adopts the shared foundation – humans stay liable for every word – yet it goes further:

- *Idea and writing aid*
Authors may prompt AI for outlines or language polishing. They must verify each sentence and declare every use in an “AI Use” note.

- *Total ban on AI imagery*
No AI-generated or AI-altered visuals appear in our pages. Three narrow exceptions apply: licensed agency art, images examined in studies about AI, and domain-trained tools whose data and method can be audited. All such visuals carry a clear label.
- *Peer review shield*
Reviewers and editors must never paste manuscript text into external bots. Confidentiality stands above convenience.

These rules rest on simple verbs – allow, ban, declare – so no reader wonders where the boundary lies.

Responsible practice in daily work

Write a draft? Ask the tool for synonyms, then read every line aloud before you submit.

Check facts? Search primary sources; do not trust the model's confident tone.

Need an image? Hire an artist or share the raw data that supports your claim.

Review a paper? Rely on your own judgement; the editor trusted you, not a server farm.

Such habits slow the rush yet preserve the record. AI can support craft; it cannot replace care.

Looking ahead

Models will grow stronger, cheaper, and harder to spot. Journals must meet that shift with clear policies, routine audits, and open dialogue. Ultimately, AI is set to become an indispensable research partner, but its success will depend on careful integration, robust oversight, and a commitment to advancing knowledge for the benefit of society.

Athena invites authors to join this conversation. Tell us where scripts help save time, where it slipped, and how guidelines could tighten or relax. The printed page remains a compact of trust between writer and reader. A line of code cannot sign that pact.

The hand on the wheel must stay human.

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