Guidance for Authors on Disclosing the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Manuscript Preparation

From the editors of *American Family Physician*

In 2025, family medicine journal editors jointly published guidance on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academic publishing. The editorial affirmed that authors must disclose any AI use in the research or writing process and describe how it was applied. While acknowledging that AI tools may be used, the editors emphasized that authors remain fully accountable for all content in their manuscripts (notably language, numbers, images, and references). **If the manuscript contains fabricated references, it will be rejected. Verification of the accuracy of references is a key author responsibility.**

The editorial also called on journals and editorial teams to develop clear, transparent guidelines for authors and reviewers regarding the use of AI in the publication process. To address that charge, this document provides authors with guidance on two key questions: a) What uses of AI should be disclosed? and b) How should those disclosures be made? When considering disclosure, authors should reflect on the following components of the content development process (Table).

Table: Disclosing Artificial Intelligence Use in Manuscript Preparation: Activities, Sample Disclosure Statements, and Included Examples

Activity	Sample disclosure language	Examples of activities included
Generating ideas	AI tools were used to brainstorm research questions, hypotheses, or conceptual frameworks.	• Generating potential research questions, study aims, or conceptual models • Using AI for exploratory ideation
Reviewing literature	AI tools were used to assist with identifying, organizing, or summarizing relevant literature.	• Identifying or summarizing articles • Extracting key themes • Suggesting relevant references based on prompts
Designing research studies	AI tools were used to support study design decisions.	• Suggesting study designs, variables, measures, or analytic approaches • Drafting protocols or flow diagrams
Retrieving, cleaning, preparing, analyzing, and interpreting data	AI tools were used to assist with data retrieval (including generating), cleaning, preparation, analysis, or interpretation.	• Generating analytic code • Creating synthetic data • Cleaning and merging data • Suggesting models • Summarizing analytic results • Interpreting outputs
Writing or drafting manuscript content	AI tools were used to generate part or all of the manuscript text.	• Generating text from prompts • Expanding on or rewriting text • Generating summaries of text (eg, to summarize arguments made in another publication)

Activity	Sample disclosure language	Examples of activities included
Refining or formatting reported data	AI tools were used to assist with refinement of the presentation of data reported in the manuscript.	• Improving clarity or readability of research data • Formatting research data submitted as part of the manuscript or its associated materials (eg, in supplementary materials or appropriate repositories)
Generating or editing illustrative images, diagrams, or figures	AI tools were used to generate images, diagrams, or other figures in the manuscript for illustrative or aesthetic purposes only.	• Creating images (eg, a depiction of anatomy), that might otherwise be created by a human artist as an illustration
Generating or editing data visualizations	AI tools were used to visualize or refine visualizations of research data or results in the manuscript.	• Creating graphs, tables, or other visualizations of research datasets

Note: These are examples of activities that can be reported and not an exhaustive list.

Once all authors have identified which activities involved AI use, the following guidance describes how each use should be disclosed.

Who Should Disclose?
All authors, including the corresponding and co-authors.

What Manuscript Versions Should Be Included in the Disclosure?
All versions, including the final and preceding drafts.

What Is Included in the AI Disclosure Statement?
Authors must provide a separate disclosure for each AI tool used. Each disclosure should include the following elements:

- Name of the AI tool
- Version number(s)
- Developer
- Date(s) of use (ranges of dates are acceptable)
- Description of how the tool was used
- A statement affirming that the author(s) accept full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of all AI-assisted content

Note: This guidance does not apply to tools that are used for checking grammar and spelling or for AI overviews generated by search engines.

Sample Disclosure Statement

Template:

[AI tool name] (version [#], [Developer], accessed [date]) was used to [describe specific use]. The author(s) have reviewed, edited, and take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of all content in this manuscript.

Completed example:

ChatGPT (version 4o, OpenAI, between January 3, 2026, and January 15, 2026) was used to refine the manuscript for greater readability and clarity. The author(s) have reviewed, edited, and take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of all content in this manuscript.

Additional Tips

- After completing their copyright transfer agreements, authors are not permitted to upload their manuscript to AI tools, including large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT.
- LLMs should not be listed as references, unless the authors are making claims about the LLMs themselves.
- The journal reserves the right to request language used for prompts to understand how the tool was used, so it is important to retain all artifacts of LLM use.
- When integrating an LLM into the content development process, the authors should consider using a single chat or project. At the time of disclosure, this conversation can be queried to summarize how AI was used.
- AI-generated images should follow the same disclosure policy as for other content. The journal reserves the right to request the prompt used to create the image. Original images and figures, not produced by AI, are preferred.
- **Repeated for emphasis: If the manuscript contains fabricated references, it will be rejected. Verification of the accuracy of references is a key author responsibility.**

References

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