

COPE European Seminar 2014

When I took over the role of Managing Editor of the *Journal of Postgraduate Medical Institute Peshawar* a few years back, one of the major tasks was to achieve indexations and memberships of all the prestigious organizations, committees and agencies. To become a member of COPE was very high on the priority list, and once we became the member, I was regularly following the activities of COPE and utilised the dynamic and rich website of COPE for various resources. Use increased considerably when we organised a conference on “Medical publication” at our institute and more so when I became an executive member of the Pakistan Association of Medical Editors (PAME).

Along with other professional commitments, I felt the need to be more connected with the activities of COPE and when I received the information regarding the seminar on “European Perspectives On Publication Ethics” to be held at Brussels, Belgium, I applied for it and fortunately, was selected to attend the seminar.

The seminar was indeed interesting, informative and educative, and was well attended by editors, publishers, reviewers and authors. All of the speakers highlighted the important areas relevant to publication ethics. Their topics focused on publication ethics oriented research and information about ethical policies and issues faced in the contemporary world regarding publication. They also shared the approaches and initiatives taken to address these problems.

The first presentation was “Guidance on research and publication ethics in Europe” by “Simon Godecharle”, who talked about guidance on research integrity in Europe, publication issues and detecting research misconduct, focusing on authorship, which generated a lot of debate involving the updated authorship criteria of the ICMJE. Professor Ana Marusic spoke on “Differences in publication ethics in Central and Eastern Europe”, and described the possible differences in policies of biomedical journals. Professor Christopher Baethge presented “Conflicts of interest and other ethical problems in German Medical Publishing” and emphasised the problems related to original articles published in languages other than English. Professor Debora Weber-Wulff discussed “Plagiarism detection: manual versus automatic plagiarism detection”, and shared facts pertaining to plagiarism detection. The presentations were followed by workshop sessions in the afternoon, which included discussion of ethical cases for which the participants were divided into groups. The cases were based on those shared with COPE by editors that encountered these issues. There was healthy discussion of these cases, and the groups suggested possible editorial responses before being told of with the actual action taken regarding the respective cases.

After the case discussion, Dr Irene Hames re-presented the paper presented at the 7th International Congress on Peer Review and Biomedical Publication, entitled “The COPE Case Taxonomy: reclassification and analysis of COPE’s publication ethics cases” which highlighted important areas, including COPE ethical guidelines for peer reviewers. There were also two the posters presented—“Violation of publication ethics in manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals” and “The art of finding and documentation of plagiarism without commercial plagiarism detection software”—which underlined some important findings regarding relevant areas of publication ethics.

The seminar educated the participants, generated valuable discussion, encouraged participation, and gave participants the opportunity to network and share their experiences and challenges. However, it is suggested that the programme should be made more interactive, and more time and sessions should be dedicated to discussion of cases in order to prepare editors to deal with similar situations in their practice.

In this context, I have been motivated to plan and facilitate a workshop on “Publication ethics” in the forthcoming National Conference of Pakistan Association of Medical Editors later this month. Organisation of such a workshop during the National Conference will benefit other journals and editors in the country and the whole region, and I believe it will contribute to the cause of COPE, not only at the National level but on a regional level, as other associations of medical editors from South Asia have been invited to attend the conference.

Participation in the seminar has also been instrumental in motivating the reorganisation of my priorities as an editor, and this is in fact a true achievement for the organisers of the seminar in particular and the team of COPE in general.

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