



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Friday 21 October 2011**

### **COPE helps editors to stamp out unethical research and false reporting**

Unethical research, false reporting and plagiarism are just three of the topics covered by a new eLearning programme for journal editors, launched today by COPE, the Committee on Publication Ethics.

COPE is a UK-based registered charity, which was set up in 1997 to help editors deal with publication misconduct. It provides advice and support for more than 7,000 editors around the world, including those working for many of the world's major academic publishers.

“Our eLearning programme aims to give editors a deeper understanding of publication ethics and provides practical guidance on how to detect, prevent and handle misconduct” explains Dr Elizabeth Wager, Chair of COPE.

“Most researchers and editors behave in an ethical and responsible way. However it is vital to ensure that all research that is published is carried out, and presented, to the highest standards of professionalism, accuracy and honesty. Journal editors often face difficult ethical issues and, up to now, they have had little or no formal training. That is why COPE's advice and support are so important.”

The first four eLearning modules, which are available to COPE members from today, cover an introduction to publication ethics, plagiarism, falsification and fabrication.

Seven further modules will be rolled out later, covering: authorship, conflicts of interest, editor misconduct, reviewer misconduct, redundant publication, selective reporting and unethical research.

“Editors sometimes don't know where to turn when they are faced with complex issues” adds Dr Wager. “COPE started life as an informal ‘self-help’ group for editors and we continue to provide advice based on other members' experience and knowledge. Now we have members around the world it's not practical to expect everybody to be able to attend meetings in London, so we

are launching this eLearning package to reach our members around the world.”

Other support COPE provides for editors and publishers includes:

- A Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors
- Guidelines on a wide range of ethical issues, such as retracting articles, ethical editing and handling authorship disputes
- Flowcharts on how to handle problems such as fabricated data, disputed authorship and undisclosed conflicts of interest, provided in various languages
- A discussion document on plagiarism, launched May 2011, with further documents on subjects such as dealing with whistleblowers and data sharing planned
- Annual seminars, with future 2011 dates including San Diego, USA, and Melbourne, Australia
- A quarterly ethical editing newsletter available free from COPE’s website.

“We hope that the eLearning module will provide a valuable resource for editors and publishers, especially those seeking an introduction to the subjects, and will complement the wide-ranging advice and support already available from COPE” concludes Dr Wager.

For more information visit the COPE website at: <http://publicationethics.org>

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#### **Notes to Editors**

COPE, the Committee on Publication Ethics, is a registered charity that was established in 1997 by a small group of medical journal editors in the UK and now has more than 7,000 members worldwide, from all disciplines. Membership is open to editors of academic journals and others interested in publication ethics. Many of the world’s largest international publishers have signed up their journals as COPE members.

COPE provides advice to editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics, in particular how to handle research and publication misconduct. It also provides a forum for members to discuss individual cases, funds research on publication ethics, publishes a quarterly newsletter and organises annual seminars. COPE members are expected to follow the Code of Conduct and the organisation has also developed Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors. <http://publicationethics.org>