What to do if you suspect fabricated data

(a) Suspected fabricated data in a submitted manuscript

Reviewer expresses suspicion of fabricated data

Thank reviewer, ask for evidence (if not already provided) and state your plans to investigate

Consider getting a 2nd opinion from another reviewer

Contact author to explain concerns but do not make direct accusation

Author replies

No response

Unsatisfactory answer/admits guilt

Satisfactory explanation

Inform all authors that you intend to contact institution/regulatory body

Contact author’s institution(requesting an investigation)

Contact author to explain concerns but do not make direct accusation

Author replies

No response

Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for emails)

Author replies

No response

Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance, if necessary coordinating with co-authors’ institutions

Contact regulatory body (e.g. GMC for UK doctors) requesting an enquiry

No or unsatisfactory response

Author cleared

Author found guilty

Reject

Inform reviewer of outcome

Apologise to author, proceed with peer-review if appropriate

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