



PRESS RELEASE

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Global standards for authors and editors tackle thorny issues such as research bias and misleading publicity

Research bias, misleading publicity, confidentiality and embargoes are just some of the controversial issues covered by international standards for academic journal editors and authors, developed with the help of worldwide experts and co-ordinated by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

The charity, which has been promoting, and advising on, international publication ethics since 1997, is calling on research institutions, funders, professional societies and publishers to support the new standards on responsible research publication.

The standards, developed following the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity in Singapore, bring together the views of experts in biology, forestry, earth sciences, humanities, mathematics, medicine, philosophy and political science from Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, the Middle East and North America.

Just published online, they tackle a wide range of issues affecting the authors and editors who get involved in an estimated 1.4 million research articles for nearly 24,000 scholarly journals every year.

COPE's Chair Dr Elizabeth Wager, a freelance medical writer and editor, and Vice-chair Dr Sabine Kleinert, Senior Executive Editor of The Lancet, were delighted to be asked to co-ordinate the standards.

"COPE already helps editors from many of the world's major publishers to deal with publication misconduct and the standards for editors complement the COPE Code of Conduct followed by our members" explains Dr Wager. "We also welcomed the chance to get involved in the first universal global guidelines for authors from all areas of scholarly publishing, including research scientists, university academics and clinicians."

The standards cover issues such as:

- Authors negotiating agreements that do not allow research funders and sponsors to veto publication of findings that do not favour their product or position.
- Editors ensuring that processes are in place to separate commercial activities within a journal from editorial processes and decisions and making sure that sponsored supplements undergo the same rigorous quality control and peer review as any other journal content.
- Authors respecting embargoes by not seeking publicity for papers that have been accepted for publication, but not yet published, and ensuring that press releases accurately reflect their work and do not include statements that go further than the research findings.
- Editors critically assessing any potential breaches of data protection and patient confidentiality and making sure that any research complies with national and international laws and best practice guidelines.

Both documents also include specific sections on the special issues raised by research involving humans or animals, which may not apply to other types of research.

“While some differences in publishing conventions exist between fields, it was evident from the Singapore discussions - which focused on promoting research integrity in a global environment - that there is much common ground and a desire to raise standards in the reporting of research” says Dr Wager. “Our shared vision is to establish widely-supported standards for authors and editors of scholarly research publications that clearly outline responsible research reporting and publishing practice.

“We hope these international standards will be endorsed by research institutions, funders, professional societies, and publishers.”

The two international standards can be found on the COPE website at:
<http://publicationethics.org/resources/international-standards>

The complete conference proceedings, published by Imperial College and World Scientific Publishing in Singapore, are available at:
<http://www.worldscibooks.com/socialsci/8102.html>

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Notes to Editors

- Kleinert S & Wager E (2011) Responsible research publication: international standards for editors. A position statement developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity, Singapore, July 22-24, 2010. Chapter 51 in: Mayer T & Steneck N (eds) *Promoting Research Integrity in a Global Environment*. Imperial College Press / World Scientific Publishing, Singapore (pp 317-28). (ISBN 978-981-4340-97-7)
- Wager E & Kleinert S (2011) Responsible research publication: international standards for authors. A position statement developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity, Singapore, July 22-24, 2010. Chapter 50 in: Mayer T & Steneck N (eds) *Promoting Research Integrity in a Global Environment*. Imperial College Press / World Scientific Publishing, Singapore (pp 309-16). (ISBN 978-981-4340-97-7)
- 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>
- The figures quoted in this press release are based on: 1) Scientific journal publishing: yearly volume and open access availability. Björk et al. *Information Research*, 14(1) paper 391. (2009). 2) Article 50 million: an estimate of the number of scholarly articles in existence. Jinha, Arif E. *Learned Publishing*, 23.3, pp258-263. (2010). 3) Elsevier's written evidence to the United Kingdom House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology inquiry into science publishing (2004).