What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(a) Suspected redundant publication in a submitted manuscript

1. **Reviewer informs editor about redundant publication**
   - Redundancy detected by text-matching software (e.g., CrossCheck screening)
2. **Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate. Get full documentary evidence if not already provided**
3. **Check extent and nature of overlap/redundancy**
   - Major overlap/redundancy (i.e., based on same data with identical or very similar findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy e.g., by changing title or author order or not citing previous papers)
   - Minor overlap with some element of redundancy or legitimate overlap (e.g., methods) or re-analysis (e.g., sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience)
   - No significant overlap
4. **Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of duplication**
5. **Contact author in neutral terms/expressing concern/explaining journal’s position**
   - Explain that secondary papers must refer to original Request missing reference to original and/or remove overlapping material Proceed with review/decision
6. **Inform reviewers of decision and proceed with review**
7. **Inform reviewer of outcome/action**
8. **Author responds**
   - No response
   - Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for emails)
9. **Inform reviewers of decision and proceed with review**
10. **Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/legitimate republication)**
    - Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance
11. **Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance**
12. **Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour**
13. **No response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months**
14. **If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months**
15. **Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour**
16. **If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months**
17. **Inform author(s) of your action**
18. **Inform reviewer of outcome/action**

Notes:
- The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication.
- It may be helpful to request the institution’s policy.
- Ask authors to verify that their manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.
- International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original.

Further reading:
- COPE Cases on redundant/duplicate publication: http://publicationethics.org/cases/?f[0]=im_field classifications%3A829
- Duplicate publication guidelines: www.biomedcentral.com/about/duplicatepublication (nb. the definitions only apply to BMC and may not be accepted by other publishers).

Links to other sites are provided for your convenience but COPE accepts no responsibility or liability for the content of those sites.

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