What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(b) Suspected redundant publication in a published manuscript

Reader informs editor about redundant publication

Thank reader and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check extent and nature of overlap/redundancy

Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same dataset with identical findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g. by changing title or author order or not referring to previous papers)

Minor overlap ("salami publishing" with some element of redundancy) or legitimate repetition or re-analysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/repeated methods)

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

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing concern/explaining journal's position
Explain that secondary papers must refer to original
Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper
Where editor has reason to believe failure to refer to previous paper(s) was deliberate, consider informing author's superior or person responsible for research governance

Discuss with reader and proceed with review

No significant overlap

No response

Author responds

Inform reader of outcome/action

Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance

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

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/legitimate publication)

Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behaviour

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Consider publishing statement of redundant publication or retraction
Inform editor of other journal involved

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Inform reader of outcome/action

Inform author(s) of your action

Contact author's superior or person responsible for research governance

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Published 2006

Current version
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Notes
- The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication.
- Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations.
- ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original. Editors may consider publishing a correction (i.e. the link to the original article) rather than a retraction/notice of duplicate publication in such cases.

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