What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(b) Suspected redundant publication in a published article

Reader informs editor about redundant publication

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

Check degree 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, author order or not referring to previous papers)
- Minor overlap (‘salami publishing’ with some element of redundancy) or legitimate re-analysis (e.g. subgroup/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience)

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

Author responds

- No response

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Consider publishing statement of redundant publication or retraction

Inform editor of other journal involved

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

Note: 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

Note: 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

No response

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

Inform reader of outcome/action

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

Note: 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

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Inform author(s) of your action

If no response

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

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

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

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