How COPE handles complaints against member journals

Complaint sent to COPE Operations Manager (after journal’s/publisher’s own complaints procedure has been exhausted)

Operations Manager checks that complaint:
• is against a COPE member
• is within the remit of the COPE Code of Conduct
• has been through journal’s/publisher’s own complaints procedure
• relates to actions taken after 1/1/05 (when COPE Code was published)

If so:
Evidence sent to Chair of COPE including correspondence about journal’s handling of complaints
Chair of COPE informs editor of complaint
Chair consults with at least one member of COPE Council

Agree that journal has dealt satisfactorily with complaint
Agree that case requires further investigation

Refer to COPE sub-committee*
Sub-committee considers case and drafts reports
Report approved by all officers (excluding any with links to publisher of the journal being complained about)**
Report is sent to editor and complainant who may correct factual errors
COPE Council are informed

If the Chair of COPE belongs to the same publishing group as the subject of the complaint, the case will be handled by another COPE Officer

If not, COPE cannot consider complaint
Complainant may try other organisations, e.g. Press Complaints Commission, World Association of Medical Editors (WAME)

*Sub-committee will compromise:
• COPE Officer
• Three other Council members (aiming to include at least one who is not an editor)
Members may not work for the same publishing group as the subject of the complaint

**Actions might include:
• editor apologises to complainant
• editor publishes statement from COPE in journal
• journal/editor agrees to improve procedures

COPE Council are informed
Anonymised summary of complaint may be posted on COPE website if there are no legal concerns