How COPE handles complaints against member journals

1. Complaint sent to COPE Complaints Officer (after journal’s/publisher’s own complaints procedure has been exhausted)

2. Complaints Officer checks that complaint:
   - is against a COPE member
   - is within the remit of the COPE Code of Conduct for Journal Editors
   - relates to actions taken after 1/1/05 (when COPE Code was published)
   - correspondence between complainant and journal and/or publisher provided
   - complaints form has been completed and contains all required information

   **If so:**

   3. COPE Complaints Officer informs journal of complaint

   4. COPE Complaints Officer consults with at least one member of COPE Council

   5. Agree that journal has dealt satisfactorily with complaint

   **If not, COPE cannot consider complaint**

   6. Complainant may try other organisations, e.g. Press Complaints Commission, World Association of Medical Editors (WAME)

   **If the COPE Complaints Officer has links to the subject of the complaint either via the publishing group, journal, or complainant, the complaint will be handled by a COPE Officer**

   7. COPE Complaints Officer consults with at least one member of COPE Council

   8. Agree that case requires further investigation

   9. Refer to COPE sub-committee**

   10. Sub-committee considers case and drafts reports

   11. Report approved by Chair and all officers (excluding any with links to publisher of the journal being complained about)**

   12. Report is sent to editor and complainant who may correct factual errors

   **Actions recommended 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**