



COPE seminar 2009 – 27 March 2009
Main Hall, Woburn House, Tavistock Sq, London, 9.30 am – 4.30 pm

Programme

- 9.30 Registration
10.00 Welcome– Harvey Marcovitch
10.10 COPE news/activities
10.30 **The ethics of editing** — chaired by André van Steirteghem
10.30 Conflict of Interest: an editor's guide for detection of mischief, malfeasance and incompetence – John Hoey, Queen's University, Canada
11.00 Editorial professionalism and ethical concerns in small journals – Behrooz Astaneh, editor of the *Iranian Journal of Medical Sciences*
- 11.20 *Tea Break* (Meet members of COPE council and explore COPE's website during the breaks)
- 11.45 Workshop break out sessions
12:30 Workshop feedback — chaired by Trish Groves
- 1.00 *Lunch*
- 2.00 **Is publication ethics a luxury which small journals can't afford?** — chaired by David Katz
2.00 Editorial and publishing ethics: a non-bio(medical) point of view – Randall Stephenson, editor of the *Journal of Geodynamics*
2.25 Publication ethics and small journals – Margaret Rees, editor of *Maturitas*
- 2.50 Workshop break out sessions
- 3.30 *Tea Break* (Meet members of COPE council and explore COPE's website during the breaks)
- 4:00 Workshop feedback — chaired by Elizabeth Wager
4.30 Summary and close
- 4.35 COPE AGM**

Please note that the proceedings of the seminar may be recorded and in some cases reported verbatim in COPE's annual report. By attending the seminar you are agreeing that any feedback you give may be recorded and may appear in print.

Morning session: The ethics of editing

Case 1: Potential competing interest

You are the editor of a journal that published an animal study on the use of a drug for treating a clinical condition. The authors did not declare any competing interests.

A few months after publication, a journalist tells you that the corresponding author invented the drug, has several patents on it and is the director of a charity that is seeking approval for clinical trials of the drug. He also says the corresponding author co-owned a commercial company with whom the charity does business.

You contact the paper's corresponding author. He says that the commercial company was a subsidiary of the charity and does not own the drug. The charity had applied for a patent, but it was yet to be approved. He also said that if the drug was ever licensed, the charity might choose to pass on some of the royalties to the inventors.

Q: What should you do?

Case 2: Authorship dispute

You are the editor of a journal that has accepted two manuscripts from author A. Before publication you receive a request from author A to remove author B from the authors' list and simply acknowledge him. Author A describes what is clearly a personal dispute with author B which has arisen since the articles were submitted. You publish both articles with author B's name removed.

Then author B writes to you and says that his name has been removed from three manuscripts, and that he was the senior author while author A was a researcher in his laboratory. You had rejected the third manuscript earlier, but now it's being considered by Journal Z. This journal is published by the same publisher as yours. The publisher alerts the editors of Journal Z, who reject the paper.

You consider contacting the authors' institution, but you hear on the grapevine that the institute is racked with scandal and staff disputes. You and the editors of journal Z decide to reject all future submissions from both authors A and B.

Q: Have you and the editors of journal Z handled all of this correctly?

Afternoon session: Is publication ethics a luxury which small journals can't afford?

Case 3: Alleged plagiarism

You are the editor of a journal that accepts, after favourable peer review, an unsolicited review article by two authors A&B. Before publication author A withdraws her name, saying she cannot guarantee the originality of the text. Author A had recently discovered that another review paper, co-authored with the same colleague in journal X, contained large chunks of text plagiarised from a review published in journal Y. You check the two texts in journals X and Y and verify that paragraphs of text have been copied, word for word. You decide to withdraw the paper you have been sent and tell author B. Author B denies plagiarism in the article that you are considering, and says that in the previous case he simply failed to cite the earlier work. He threatens to take "further steps against" you if you tell anyone about that case. Author B is the editor of a journal. You are worried that he thinks it is acceptable to plagiarise other people's work.

Q: What should you do about the manuscript you're considering? Should you tell the owners of author B's journal about the previous plagiarism or non-citation? And his institution?

Case 4: Allegation of reviewer malpractice

Your journal receives a paper reporting an epidemiological study conducted around a factory, funded by a group of plaintiffs' lawyers. The study concluded that health effects in the community were related to exposures emanating from the factory.

You receive one detailed and critical reviewer's report recommending rejection and one positive review. On balance, you decide to reject the paper.

The paper is also submitted in support of a lawsuit (relating to the same plaintiffs) and the author, as expert witness for the plaintiffs, discloses that your journal has rejected the paper. He then has to submit to the court the reviewers' reports. It emerges that the positive review came from a paid expert for the plaintiffs who "had had a relationship with the study author for more than 10 years". You hear about this informally from someone who was at court.

Your journal encourages nomination of suitable reviewers, but only uses them sometimes, and always with another chosen separately. You do not, however, ask reviewers to declare competing interests. In this case the positive reviewer was, indeed, suggested by the author.

Q: There is no formal comeback from the court to your journal. But what should you do?