What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript

Reviewer (or editor) raises ethical concern about manuscript

- Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate

Author(s) supplies relevant details

- Satisfactory answer: Apologise and continue review process
- Unsatisfactory answer/no response:
  - Inform author that review process is suspended until case is resolved
  - Consider submitting case to COPE if it raises novel ethical issues

Forward concerns to author’s employer or person responsible for research governance at institution

- Issue resolved satisfactory: Inform reviewer about outcome of case
- No/unsatisfactory response:
  - Contact institution at 3–6 monthly intervals, seeking conclusion of investigation
  - Refer to other authorities (e.g., medical registration body, UKPRU, ORI)

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