What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(a) Suspected redundant publication in a submitted manuscript

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Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same data with identical or very similar findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy e.g. by changing title or author order or not citing previous papers)

Check extent and nature of overlap/redundancy

Minor overlap with some element of redundancy or legitimate overlap (e.g. methods) or re-analysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience)

Contact author in neutral terms expressing concern explaining journal’s position

Explain that secondary papers must refer to original Request missing reference to original and/or remove overlapping material Proceed with review decision

No significant overlap

Inform reviewers of decision and proceed with review

No response

Author responds

No response

Inform reviewer of outcome/decision

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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Inform reviewers of decision and proceed with review

Satisfactory explanation (honest error journal instructions unclear legitimate republication)

No response

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

Try to obtain acknowledgement of your letter

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

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

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

Notify author(s) of your action

Inform reviewer of outcome/action

Unsatisfactory explanation/admission of fault

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

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

If no response keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

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Notifications

• The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication.
• It may be helpful to request the institution’s policy.
• Ask authors to verify that their manuscript is original and has not been published elsewhere.
• International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original.

Further reading
COPE Cases on redundant/duplicate publication: http://publicationethics.org/cases/?f[0]=im_field_classifications%3A829
Duplicate publication guidelines www.biomedcentral.com/about/duplicatepublication (note the definitions only apply to BMC and may not be accepted by other publishers).

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Further reading
COPE Cases on redundant/duplicate publication: http://publicationethics.org/cases/?f[0]=im_field_classifications%3A829
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