Publication – the role of editors and journals

Current best practices

Liz Wager; presented to the World Conference on Research Integrity, Lisbon, Portugal; September 2007
What can editors do?

- Detect
- Prevent
- Educate
- Promote
- Inform
What can editors do?

- Detect research and publication m/c
- Prevent publication misconduct
- Educate authors
- Promote good practice
  - be aware of how journal policies may influence behaviour
- Inform authorities, employers
What editors CANNOT do

- Prevent research misconduct
- Investigate research misconduct
- Settle disputes (e.g. authorship)
- Investigate most types of publication misconduct

- although they may instigate investigations
## Misconduct: definitions

### Research misconduct
- Fabrication
- Falsification
- Unethical research

### Publication misconduct
- Plagiarism
- Biased/selective reporting
- Authorship abuse
- Redundant publication
- Undeclared CoI
- Reviewer misconduct
- Abuse of position

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Editors can't turn back the clock
Organizations concerned about publication ethics

COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics
WAME: World Assoc of Medical Editors
CSE: Council of Science Editors
ICMJE: Intnl Cttee of Med Jnl Editors
Relevant guidelines

- **COPE**: Code of Conduct, Best Practice, Flow charts
- **ICMJE**: Uniform Requirements
- **WAME**: Policy statements, Recommendations on publication ethics
- **CSE**: Policy statements, White papers
Other guidelines
(not from/for editors)

• Good Publication Practice for pharmaceutical companies (GPP)
  www.gpp-guidelines.org

• European/American Medical Writers Association guidelines (EMWA, AMWA)
  www.emwa.org  www.amwa.org

• Declaration of Helsinki (WMA)
  http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm
## What do the guidelines cover?

1: Policies for journals/editors

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<th>Role of reviewer</th>
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## What do the guidelines cover?

### 2: Policies for authors

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Editors have been influential in:

- Declaring competing interests
- Ensuring by-line reflects contributions
  - Preventing ghost / guest authorship
  - Defining role of professional writers
- Reducing publication bias by encouraging trial registration
New trials registered at clinicaltrials.gov
May – Oct 2005

Currently contains >40,000 trials

ICMJE deadline
Problems

• Little data on incidence of publication misconduct
• Hard to identify real trends
• Instruction is not enough
• Editors need to work with academic institutions, funders, regulators …
Room for improvement

- Some journals / editors lead the way (especially biomedical)
- Others have little interest in/ knowledge of publication ethics
- Need to train editors
- Need to fund research, training and promotion
Figure 1. The number of words devoted to the 4 major categories by each journal. Note how few words are devoted to scientific content. See Table 1 for details about the 18 subcategories.
Challenges

• Editors are busy people *dual commitment*
• Reviewers are over-stretched / volunteers *can't ask them to do more*
• Many initiatives cost time/money *e.g. routine checking for image manipulation, plagiarism*
• Publishers may not want to fund these
Journals may be reluctant to instigate investigations / publicize misconduct because of:

- Resources involved (lack of time)
- Fear of litigation
- Lack of confidence / guidance
- Previous bad experience (e.g. nothing happened / took a lot of time)
Future vision

- **Cooperation** between editors' organizations across:
  - regions
  - disciplines
- Liaison between funders, regulators and editors – **uniform global standards**
- Funding for research, training and promotion