Publication ethics: what are editors concerned about?
How do they 'cope'?

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www.publicationethics.org.uk
Organizations concerned about publication ethics

**COPE**: Committee on Publication Ethics

**CSE**: Council of Science Editors

**ICMJE**: International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (Vancouver Group)

**WAME**: World Association of Medical Editors
Relevant guidelines

- **COPE**: Code of Conduct, Best Practice, Flow charts
- **CSE**: Policy statements, White papers
- **ICMJE**: Uniform Requirements
- **WAME**: Policy statements, Recommendations on publication ethics
Useful websites

- COPE: www.publicationethics.org.uk
- CSE: www.councilscienceeditors.org
- ICMJE: www.icmje.org
- WAME: www.wame.org
Other guidelines

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

• Principles on conduct of clinical trials and communication of clinical trial results (PhRMA)
  www.phrma.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 keeps editors awake at night?

• Duplicate submissions
• Redundant publications
• Undeclared conflicts of interest
• Authorship problems
• Selective publication
• Plagiarism, fabrication, falsification
• Reviewer misconduct
WAME policy statement

• Ghost authorship exists when someone has made substantial contributions to writing a manuscript and this role is not mentioned in the manuscript itself. WAME considers ghost authorship dishonest and unacceptable.
but WAME goes on to say

• To prevent some instances of ghost authorship, editors should make clear in their journal's information for authors that medical writers can be legitimate contributors and that their roles and affiliations should be described in the manuscript.
According to WAME, when editors detect ghost written MSs they may:

- publish a notice that a manuscript has been ghost written, along with the names of the responsible companies and the submitting author
- alert the authors' academic institutions, identifying the commercial companies
- provide specific names if contacted by the popular media or government organizations
- share their experiences on the WAME Listserv and within other forums
It is also important that every person who contributed to the writing of a manuscript be listed as an author. Anyone, including freelance writers and writers from communication and education companies, who contributes to reviewing the literature or drafting a manuscript must be listed as an author and complete a conflict of interest statement.
Alternatively, such persons can be listed in the Acknowledgments, including the conflict of interest information. Commissioning of manuscripts by for-profit companies is allowed, but persons contributing to the content of the manuscript must be listed as authors or be acknowledged, and the precise financial relationships, direct and indirect, between the parties involved must be explicitly described. **Failing to do this will result in rejection of the manuscript.**
Keeping editors happy

• Never submit to >1 journal at the same time
• Be transparent about linked papers – supply copies when submitting
• Register all trials and include study identifier in all publications
• Submit protocol for review
• Publish all findings (not just +ve)
• Follow authorship guidelines (no guests or ghosts)

• Transparency
Company publication strategies are important

- Policy on trial registration
- Policy to publish results of ALL trials
- Policy to avoid redundant publications (salami slicing)
- Policy on funding disclosure
- Fair authorship policies
- Default wording to acknowledge writers
What do editors do if they suspect misconduct?
COPE cases

Committee on Publication Ethics

Cases

Click on one of the categories below for a list of case studies and advice from COPE on how to respond.

Authors

1. Anonymous publication
2. Author dispute
3. Author misconduct
4. Author mistake
5. Author withdrawal
6. Author's responsibility
7. Authorship
8. Competing interests
9. Complaints procedure
10. Contributorship
11. False credentials

Miscellaneous

1. Bribery
2. Cheating
3. Commercial organ transplantation
4. Differing international standards
5. Forgery
6. Grant applications
7. Legal advice
8. Legal rights
9. Medical school
10. Non-medically qualified researchers
11. Overseas authors
COPE: background

• Founded 1997
• by editors from *BMJ*, *Lancet*, *Gut*
• Now has ~300 members
• Journals and publishers
• Quarterly forum meetings discuss anonymised cases
• Website, flowcharts, etc.
Pharma companies and agencies need:

• Written publication policy (regularly updated, consistent with guidelines)
• Train staff – ensure awareness of guidelines, understanding of policy
• Communicate policy with everybody involved (agency / authors / writers)
'Always do right – this will gratify some and astonish the rest'

Mark Twain