What ethical issues do journal editors bring to COPE?

Sabine Kleinert, COPE Vice-Chair
Liz Wager, COPE Chair
What is COPE?

• The Committee On Publication Ethics
• Founded 1997
• Forum for editors to discuss cases
• Provides guidance for editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics
What are COPE cases?

- Members bring anonymised cases to quarterly Forum meetings
- All cases are entered into a database
- Cases are available at: www.publicationethics.org
- Cases are searchable by keyword
- Keywords were rationalized in 2008
What can the database tell us?

• The number of cases brought to COPE
• Whether the publication of flowcharts in 2006 reduced the number of 'straightforward' cases
• The types of cases brought to COPE
What does it show?

• No clear trend in case numbers over time (e.g., fewer cases in 2008 than 2007) despite increase in COPE members from c300 in 2006 to >4000 today

• Possible increase in plagiarism and unethical editorial decisions (but numbers are small)
Number of cases by year

so far, 19 in 2009 ….
<table>
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Possible reasons for trends in types of cases

- COPE Code of Conduct may have led to editors questioning their practices more
- Anti-plagiarism software may have increased the number of cases detected
- New technology brings new types of misconduct e.g. image manipulation
- Actual change in patterns of misconduct but numbers are small!
No evidence that the flowcharts have reduced the number of 'straightforward' cases*

*as judged by SK & EW
but they have been well received and translated into several languages
For more information about COPE

• http://publicationethics.org