



# Supporting editors on ethical issues

Natalie Ridgeway, 10 June 2010

# COPE

- The work of COPE is guided by an elected Council
- Current officers are: Liz Wager (Chair), Sabine Kleinert (Vice-Chair), Ginny Barbour (Secretary) and Richard O'Hagan (Treasurer)
- Council members are directors and thus trustees of the charity
- Day-to-day management of COPE's business affairs is the responsibility of the permanent staff:
  - **Operations Manager** (Natalie Ridgeway)
  - **Administrator** (Linda Gough)
  - **Web Manager** (Cynthia Clerk)

# Why does publication ethics matter?

- Published research influences other researchers and changes practice!
- Journal reputation
  - Editors as guardians of the research record
  - Editors' role in fostering research integrity

# Why does research integrity matter?

- Public trust in research
- 147 retractions in MEDLINE in 2010
- Many continue to be cited (or included in systematic reviews) after retraction

# In the beginning...

- COPE began in 1997 as an informal forum for discussing ethical issues relating to research and publication in biomedical journal publishing
- Membership of COPE was aimed primarily, but not exclusively, at editors of scholarly (learned) journals

# 2007 - 2008

- COPE was more formally established as a limited company and as a UK-registered charity
- COPE's stated aim is *"The promotion for the public benefit of ethical standards of conduct in scientific research and the publication of science journals"*
- In 2007/08, membership increased substantially: from around 350 editors to around 3500

# In 2010....

- COPE currently has 5431 members
- COPE is now international in scope and fully inclusive in subject matter
- All academic disciplines and fields are now covered, for example:
  - Biomedicine
  - Pure and applied sciences
  - Engineering and technology
  - Arts, humanities and social sciences

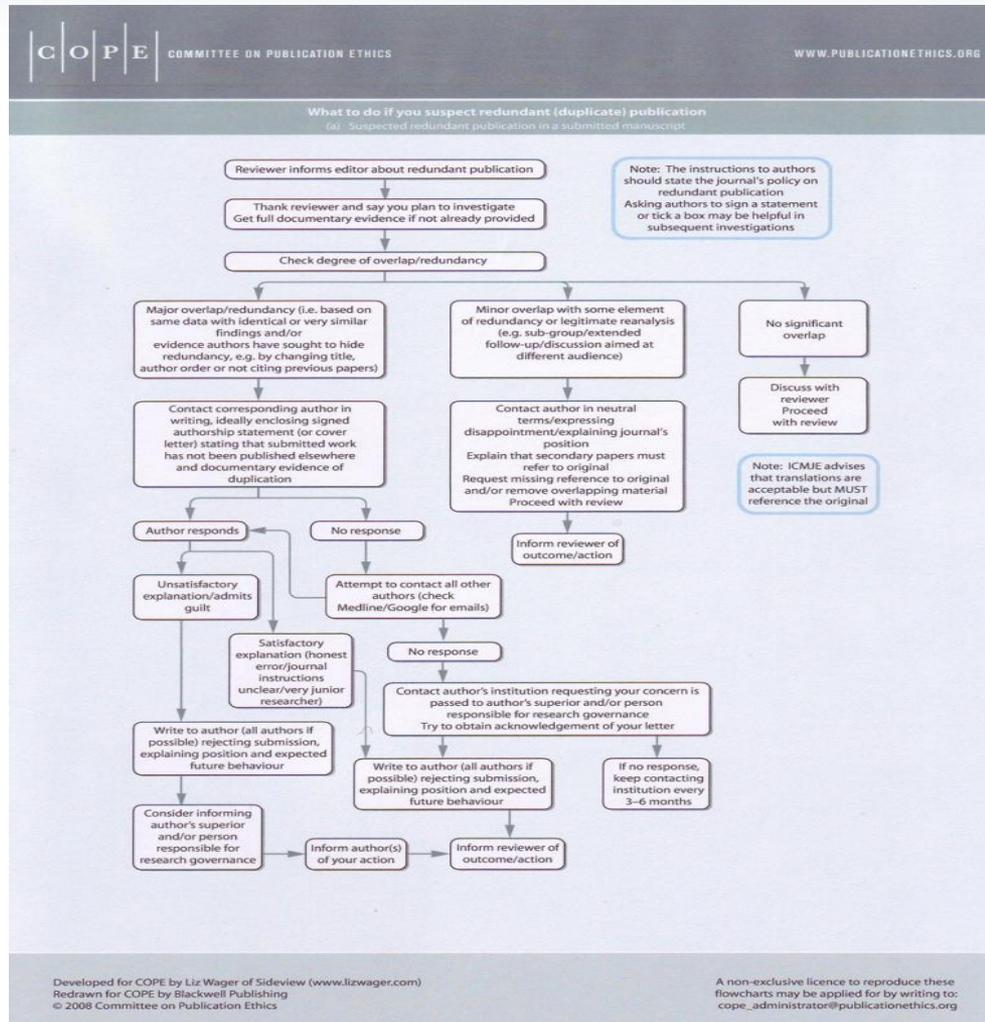
# COPE in action (1): website

COPE has produced:

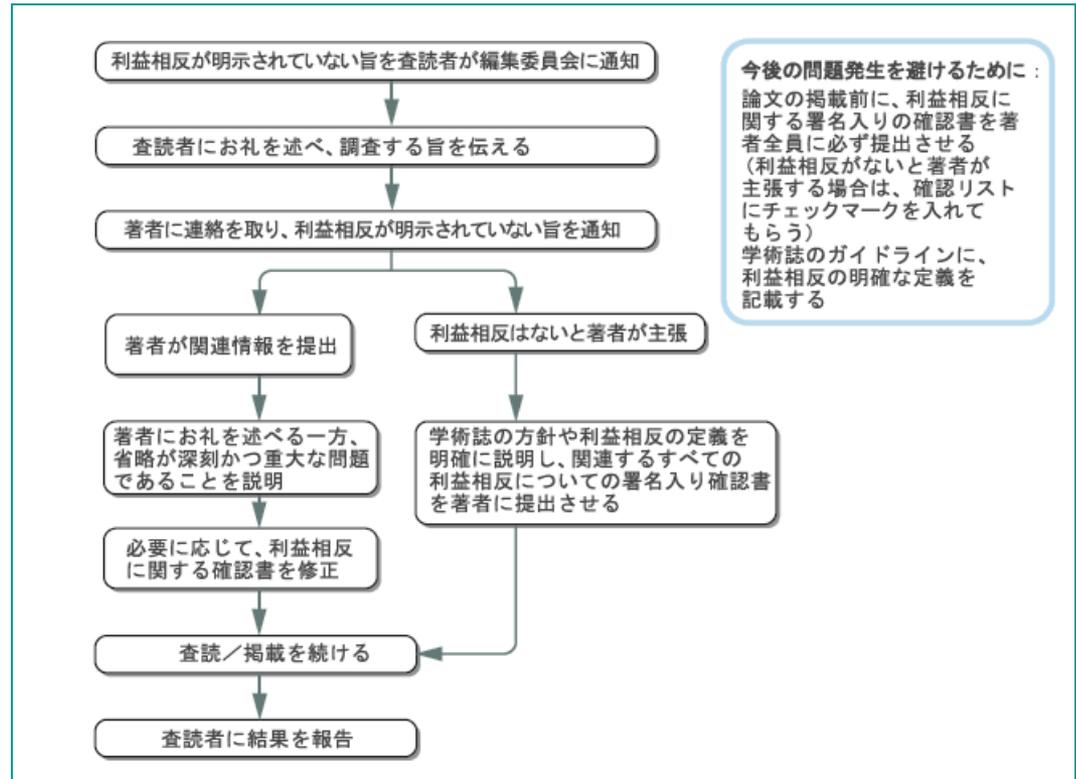
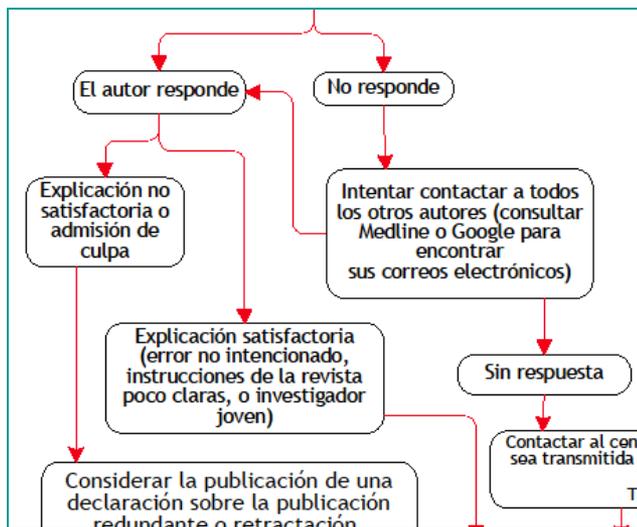
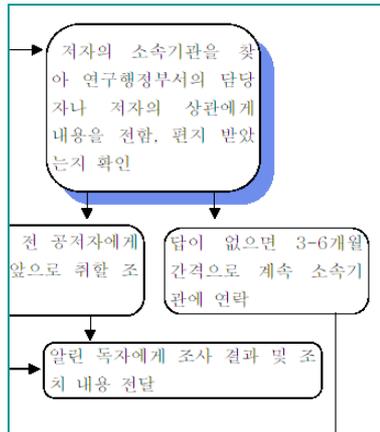
- A series of flowcharts
- A Code of Conduct
- Best Practice document
- Sample letters for handling common problems
- Retraction guidelines
- Presentations
- Other guidance (eg for editorial boards)

All are available at [www.publicationethics.org](http://www.publicationethics.org)

# COPE flowchart



# COPE flowchart



## 2nd Iranian editors' seminar

Although the idea of establishing a professional association for Iranian medical editors was first proposed many years ago, it wasn't until 2009 that almost all Iranian medical editors gathered in Tehran to get acquainted and exchange ideas. Six months later, on May 13-14, 2010, a second Iranian medical editors' seminar took place in Isfahan. On the first day a report presented by the Deputy of Research of the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education showed that currently 155 medical journals are published by Iranian medical universities and research centers. Of these, 22 have been indexed by ISI and 7 by Medline.

"How to Improve Medical Journals", "How to Challenge Usual Errors in Writing Medical Articles" and "COPE; Aims and Perspectives" were among the other topics presented at the seminar. It was interesting to find that most Iranian medical editors have ethical concerns similar to those of their European or American counterparts.

Although various cultures should be treated individually, I find that the COPE flowcharts can offer a systematic approach to dealing with ethical misbehavior. I decided to translate all the flowcharts into Persian, a task which seemed easy at first, but proved

to be very challenging when I realized that many words did not have an exact synonym in Persian. I sent the Persian version of the flowcharts and a note for Iranian editors written by COPE Chair Liz Wager to organizers of the seminar a week before the event. They distributed the note and flowcharts with the other handouts to all participants.

The seminar ended on May 14 with a decision to organize similar meetings to discuss related topics, especially ethical concerns. As the trend in medical publishing is toward considering ethical standards as basic rules, I hope that presenting COPE to Iranian editors will encourage them to join the organization, so that we can follow a uniform ethical approach in medical publishing.

Behrooz Astaneh, M.D, Deputy Editor, *Iranian Journal of Medical Sciences*



# The flowcharts cover:

- Redundant (duplicate) publication
- Plagiarism
- Fabricated data
- Changes in authorship
- Ghost, guest or gift authorship
- Conflicts of interest
- General suspected ethical concerns
- Reviewer misconduct
- How COPE deals with complaints

# COPE in action (2): advice and guidance to members

- COPE offers advice and guidance to its members, primarily through its quarterly **Forum** meetings
- Forum meetings are held in London but members can take part via tele-conference
- The Forum allows members to benefit from the views and experience of other members



8.26 x 11.69 in

# COPE in action (2): advice and guidance to members

*"Few journals have the internal resources to deal with all the complex ethical and procedural issues that arise from misbehaviour by a small minority of authors. Fortunately, COPE provides a supportive community of experienced editorial staff ready to offer useful advice and share lessons learned from dealing with similar problems. Decisions can be made with much greater confidence knowing that they are supported by one's peers."*

Philip Steer, British Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology

# COPE in action (2): advice and guidance to members

- All cases are entered into our database
- All cases and subsequent COPE recommendations are available at: [www.publicationethics.org](http://www.publicationethics.org)
- Cases are searchable by keyword

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## Cases

Listed here are all the cases COPE has discussed since its inception in 1997. You can search by keyword using either the search field top left or by filtering your inquiry using the years and keywords listed in the cloud below.

### Years

1997(15) 1998(34) 1999(27) 2000(31) 2001(39) 2002(19) 2003(22) 2004(38) 2005(20) 2006(36) 2007(42) 2008(32) 2009(29) 2010(9)

### Keywords

author mistakes authorship changes in authorship consent for publication copyright breaches data fabrication data manipulation / falsification data ownership disputed authorship editorial decisions gift authorship journal mistakes lack of ethical review/approval multiple submissions overlapping publications participant confidentiality participant consent plagiarism protection of subjects (human) quality of research redundant publication reviewer misconduct role of publisher role of sponsor sanctions for misconduct undeclared CoI (authors) undeclared CoI (reviewers) unethical research unethical treatments whistleblowers

# COPE in action (2): cases over time

	<b>97-99</b>	<b>00-02</b>	<b>03-05</b>	<b>06-08</b>	<b>09-10</b>
Total	76	80	80	109	65
Unethical editorial decisions	3	3	10	11	0
Plagiarism	4	6	11	13	7
Authorship	17	23	9	18	17
Fabrication / falsification	9	4	3	7	3
Unethical research	32	40	41	38	11

# COPE in action (3): complaints, advice and guidance

- Individuals can bring complaints against COPE members if they consider that they have not followed the Code of Conduct
- COPE will only consider a complaint after all appropriate internal mechanisms at the journal have been exhausted
- COPE does **not** adjudicate on the merits of individual cases (eg whether publication misconduct has occurred) but simply on whether the COPE member followed appropriate procedures

# COPE in action (3): complaints, advice and guidance

- COPE does **not** judge on authorship disputes or editorial decisions such as acceptance or rejection of papers or choice of reviewers.
- COPE has an Ombudsmen to arbitrate on cases where a complainant is unhappy with COPE's response
- COPE can only offer advice if the journal is a member of COPE

# COPE: other services

- [Website](#) is the primary resource for editors
- Ethics Audit (members only)
- [Newsletter](#) (quarterly)
- [Annual seminar](#) (UK and US)
- Research Grants



# Ethical Editing

Volume 2, Issue 2  
Summer 2010 NEWS AND VIEWS FROM COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

## Something old, something new, something borrowed. . .

Several years ago I attended the wedding of a long-time friend. As part of my wedding gift I created a card titled "Recipe for a Successful Marriage." I listed some ingredients (1 American man, well aged; 1 Swiss woman, zesty; 1 ½ cups physical attraction; 2 cups love and affection; ½ cup communication; ¼ cup respect; 1 tablespoon trust) and instructions (Combine the American man, the Swiss woman, and the physical attraction, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and fold in the next 4 ingredients. Simmer for at least 10 years). At the wedding reception someone read my card aloud. I was pleased that it was such a hit . . . until I read through the other cards and saw that another guest had done exactly the same thing.



Had she stolen my idea? Doubtful. Had I stolen hers? Definitely not. Had we both unknowingly been influenced by something we saw on the Internet? Possibly. Regardless of the cause, the end result was that two people came up with the same idea at the same time and "submitted" it for evaluation by our peers.

Academic publishing is like that, too. People working in the same field draw on the same body of previous knowledge and come up with the same ideas. They invest time and money in pursuing those ideas, which they then submit for publication as "Original Research". During the evaluation process they then discover that their "original" idea isn't necessarily "unique". In fact, the journal *Intensive Care Medicine* instituted a department titled "Seminal Studies in Intensive Care" after an editor saw a poster at a congress and asked the presenter whether he was aware that his idea had already been published 20 years earlier.

Not all similarities in published works result from coincidence, however. At the other end of the spectrum are researchers who appropriate the ideas, data, and language of others and present them as their own: plagiarists.

## Theme: Plagiarism

### Inside this issue

- Natalie Ridgeway takes over as Operations Manager pages 2-3
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- Iranian medical editors hold 2nd meeting page 8

### Masthead

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Editor-in-Chief

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Latest Cases

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- [Conflicting claims of intellectual property?](#)
- [Case of duplicate publication detected after 9 years](#)

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New Members

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- [Prostate Cancer and Prostatic Diseases](#)

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View Edit Revisions

Publication Ethics Blog

[Review in trials on reporting bias/withholding data in \(industry\) medical research - with lots of examples](#)

Well worth reading. <http://www.trialsjournal.com/content/pdf/1745-6215-11-37.pdf>

The overall message and the recommendations aren't new, but thus is a succinct and informative review by the German health technology assessment body that's worth citing and using in talks. It includes and goes well beyond the usual suspects (rofecoxib, gabapentin, SSRIs, rosiglitazone, oseltamivir) and gives a really nice overview of all the recent attempts to make people behave better eg through trial registration.

News & Events

Forum agenda for 8 June 2010 meeting

Download the agenda and materials for the 8 June 2010 Forum ([Download PDF, 237kb](#)).

Posted by Linda Gough, COPE Administrator on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2010

Applications open for COPE Research Grant Scheme

COPE has established a Grant Scheme to fund research in the field of publication ethics. The Scheme is designed to provide financial support to any member of COPE for a defined research project that is



Pages

Attachments

Comments

# COPE: other services

Planned services for 2010 include:

- Distance learning programme
- Code of Conduct for Publishers
- Improvements to website structure

# COPE: Support

- Bring cases to the COPE Forum for advice
- Minutes of the Forums
- Free attendance at COPE Seminars in the UK and USA
- COPE resources
- Support for editors via email and telephone
- The good public relations of supporting the only international group devoted to publication ethics

# COPE: Support (2)

- COPE support for editors may encourage responses from authors or institutions

*“Adding COPE into the equation, makes negotiations easier for editors and adds the weight of an outside body!”*

# How can we improve our support for our members?

- COPE is committed to improving communication with its members about its activities and encouraging debate about publication ethics.
- Some of the areas we will be working to improve this this year include:
  - Email notifications from the website
  - An improved newsletter design
  - Improved website functionality
  - More active blog and a Facebook page

# How can we improve our support for our members?

- We want your views!
- How can we improve our service?
- Your feedback is essential

Contact:

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