

Committee on publication ethics

Jatinder Singh

Section Editor, JPP

<http://publicationethics.org>

The basic tenet of good publication practices is faith and confidence in the peer review process. In order to select the best quality of articles, the review and publication process has to be transparent, methodical and impartial. All stages of this process are explicitly built on ethical principles and informed decisions, most of which are based on the distinctive vision of the editors. The quality of research published in a journal depends in turn on the trust that researchers, authors and readers repose in the editorial policies of the journal. The influence

of powerful financial and intellectual interests sometimes comes in the way of these policies. This makes it imperative to have clear guidelines and unambiguous policies in order to ensure the ethical treatment of all aspects of the editorial and publication processes.

What started out as an informal group of editors concerned at the increasing instances of authors flaunting scientific integrity evolved later into the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) in 1997. COPE is now a registered British charitable organization and has a number of leading journals

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

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- HOME PAGE
- ABOUT COPE
- JOIN COPE
- MEMBERS
- LINKS
- CONTACT US

What's New

- PUBLICATION ETHICS BLOG
- NEWS & EVENTS
- NEWSLETTERS

Forum

- ANNUAL REPORTS
- CASES
- SEMINARS

Resources

- AUDIT
- CODE OF CONDUCT
- EDUCATION

Helping journals to get their houses in order

COPE is a forum for editors and publishers of peer-reviewed journals to discuss issues related to the integrity of work submitted to or published in their journals. It supports and encourages editors to report, catalogue and instigate investigations into ethical problems in the publication process...

Publication Ethics Blog

[Chinese government to crack down on 'weak' journals](#)

According to a Nature news item the Chinese government, responding to concerns about the low quality of some local Chinese journals, aims to close 'weak' journals. This raises some interesting ethical questions. Should we be concerned about a government controlling academic publishing or pleased that it is seeking to raise standards?

Posted by Elizabeth Wager, COPE Chair on September 17th 2010

News & Events

Dates of future COPE meetings

2010

Tuesday 7 December 2010 (deadline for cases 23 November)

All Forum meetings are 3–5pm, in the Council Chamber, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 5-11 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8SH. Cases for discussion must be submitted online [here](#) no later than two weeks before each meeting.

Address for correspondence:

Jatinder Singh, Department of Pharmacology, Government Medical College, Amritsar, India. Email: singh.jatinder@gmail.com

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and editors as its members. Editors of scientific journals are encouraged to submit issues relating to the integrity of the work submitted for publication and the website (<http://publicationethics.org>) acts as a forum for these wide-ranging discussions and their possible redressal. The summaries of all cases and their outcomes are posted on the website and act as a guide for authors and editors, alike.

Flowcharts on handling common publication lapses are present in a section of the website. Seventeen different issues pertaining to misconduct are available. They provide solutions to problems such as redundant publication, plagiarism, fabrications of data, authorship problems, undisclosed conflict of interest, complaints against authors and reviewers and various types of ethical indiscretions.

The section on guidelines has the code of conduct for its member editors, which encourages them to work for improving the journal by ensuring adherence to quality, freedom of expression, maintenance of integrity and that of adopting a stance of not letting profits come in the way of achieving high intellectual standards. The code also advises the members to meet the needs of the authors and readers and to publish corrections, retractions and apologies, if required.

The research section has details of the work carried out at different places in terms of publication misconduct by grants provided by COPE. Projects on detecting plagiarism, author's awareness about publication ethics have been successfully completed.

The Forum is perhaps the most interesting section of the website. It hosts all Annual Reports between 1998 and 2008. These reports provide a summary of individual cases linked to the actual description of problem, the advice by COPE, follow-up by the journal and the resolution. The Cases section

contains an indexed version of all cases submitted to COPE. These reports and cases should be essential reading for all aspiring authors and those interested in implementing good publication practices.

The Seminar section lists the content from annual seminars organized by COPE. A perusal of the contents reveals a number of interesting cases; the 2010 seminars on plagiarism in the electronic age, cultural differences in plagiarism and screening for plagiarism using a web-based service are remarkable eye-openers.

The publication ethics blog allows members to post comments and to engage in discussion on varied relevant topics. The newsletter of COPE called 'Ethical Editing' is also available for download. In addition to news and reports of meetings, it has general articles which tend to demystify some of the more daunting aspects of publication ethics.

The contents of the website are not for the newbie, there is a distance education course in the offing but its details are not available. The problem of misconduct in scientific publication in the developing countries as a unique identity does not find a place on the website. Indian journal members are primarily those from large publishing houses. Smaller Indian journals have not been represented despite a discounted membership rate.

The overall accent of the website is to create awareness about publication ethics and it succeeds in doing so by its content. However, most of the text is uninspiring and only a diehard editor will go through the website in a concerted effort to find solutions. A more pleasing layout with visual appeal and ease of navigation would be more appropriate for such a topical website.

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Staying in touch with the journal

1) Table of Contents (TOC) email alert

Receive an email alert containing the TOC when a new complete issue of the journal is made available online. To register for TOC alerts go to www.jpharmacol.com/signup.asp.

2) RSS feeds

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) helps you to get alerts on new publication right on your desktop without going to the journal's website. You need a software (e.g. RSSReader, Feed Demon, FeedReader, My Yahoo!, NewsGator and NewzCrawler) to get advantage of this tool. RSS feeds can also be read through FireFox or Microsoft Outlook 2007. Once any of these small (and mostly free) software is installed, add www.jpharmacol.com/rssfeed.asp as one of the feeds.