

The COPE Guidelines

Elizabeth Wager PhD

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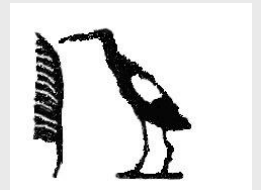
Co-Editor-in-Chief : *Research Integrity & Peer Review*

Visiting Professor, University of Split

Former Chair, COPE (2009-12)

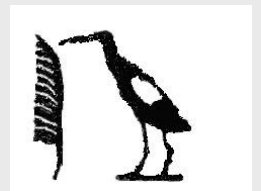
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In the beginning...

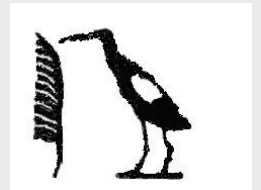
- COPE was started in 1997
- Originally an informal forum for discussing publication ethics issues
- Original members were mainly medical journal editors
- Founding members:
 - Richard Smith (*BMJ*)
 - Richard Horton (*Lancet*)
 - Michael Farthing (*Gut*)

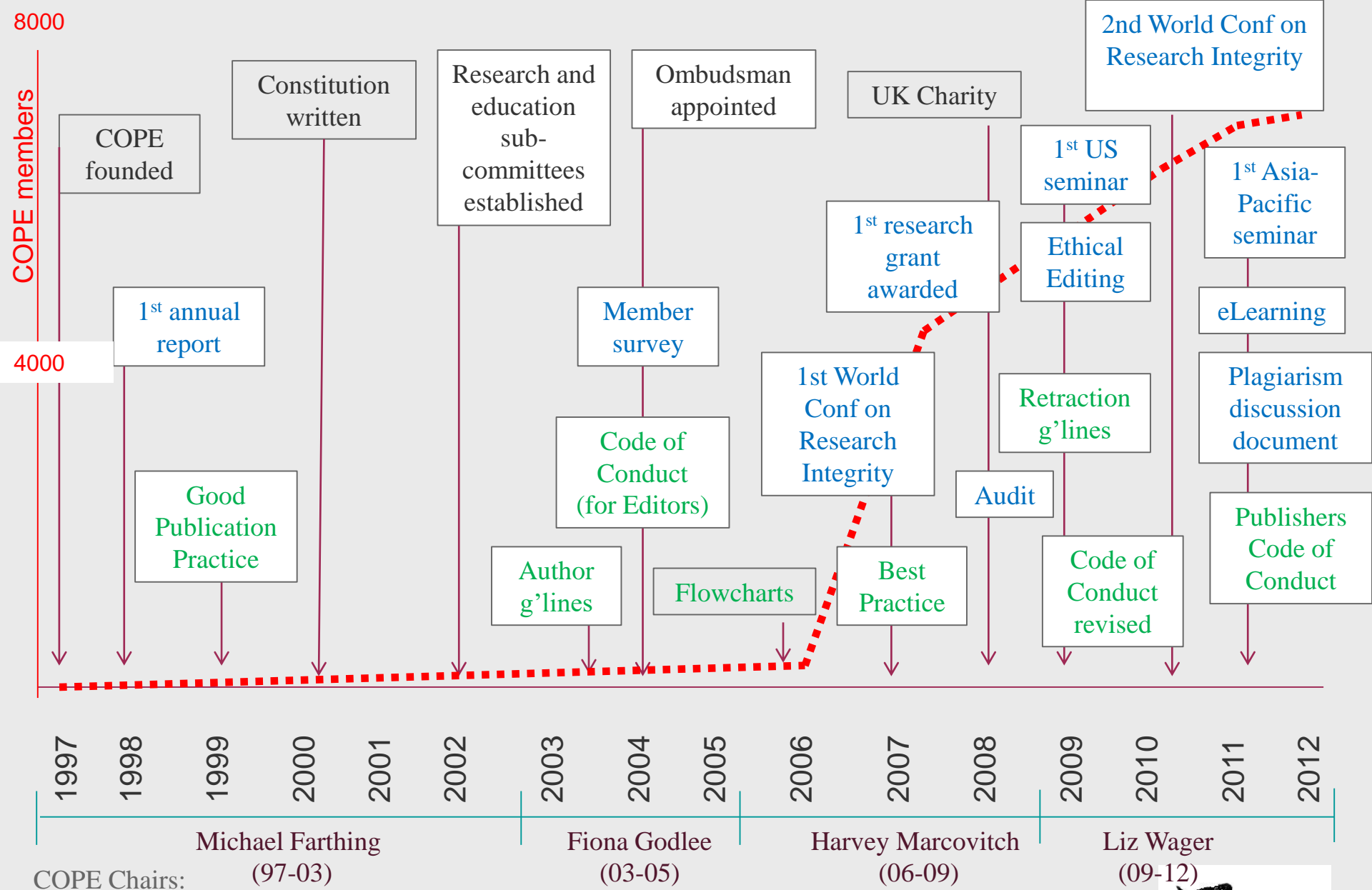


COPE is now

- A global organization
- With over 10,000 member journals from all disciplines
(science, medicine, arts, humanities)

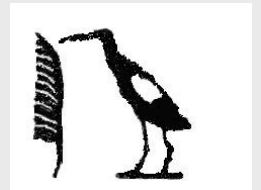
www.publicationethics.org





COPE guidelines

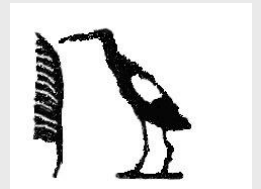
- Code of conduct for journal editors
- Best practice guidelines for editors
- Flowcharts
- Code of conduct for publishers
- Retraction guidelines
- Cooperation between journals and institutions
- Sharing information about possible misconduct
- Guidelines for peer reviewers



Joint guidelines

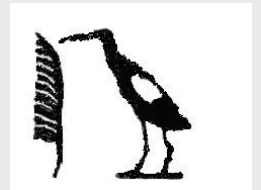
(endorsed by COPE)

- Principles of transparency & best practice in scholarly publishing (OASPA, DOAJ, WAME)
- Text recycling guidelines (BioMed Central)
- International standards for editors (WCRI)
- International standards for authors (WCRI)



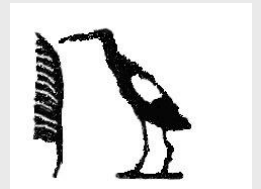
Other COPE resources

- Sample letters
- Database of cases
- Blog / discussion
- Audit tool
- Distance learning modules



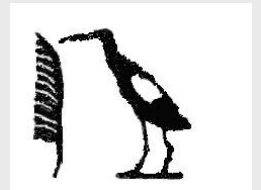
Code of Conduct for Editors

- Developed from COPE guidelines in 1999
- 1st Code of Conduct, 2004
- Flowcharts, 2006
- Best Practice Guidelines, 2007



Code of Conduct

- Sets minimum standards
- COPE expects all members to follow it



Best Practice Guidelines

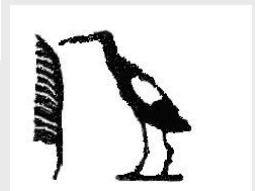
- Represent the “gold standard”
- COPE realises not all journals will be able to achieve these

7. Editorial and peer review processes

- 7.1. Editors should strive to ensure that peer review at their journal is fair, unbiased and timely.
- 7.2. Editors should have systems to ensure that material submitted to their journal remains confidential while under review.

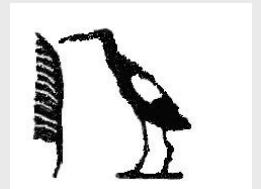
Best practice for editors would include:

- *ensuring that people involved with the editorial process (including themselves) receive adequate training and keep abreast of the latest guidelines, recommendations and evidence about peer review and journal management*
- *keeping informed about research into peer review and technological advances*



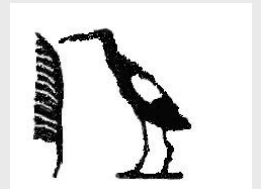
The flowcharts cover:

- Redundant (duplicate) publication
- Plagiarism
- Fabricated data
- Changes in authorship
- Ghost, guest or gift authorship
- Undisclosed conflicts of interest
- General suspected ethical concerns
- Reviewer misconduct
- Responding to whistle blowers



Flowcharts

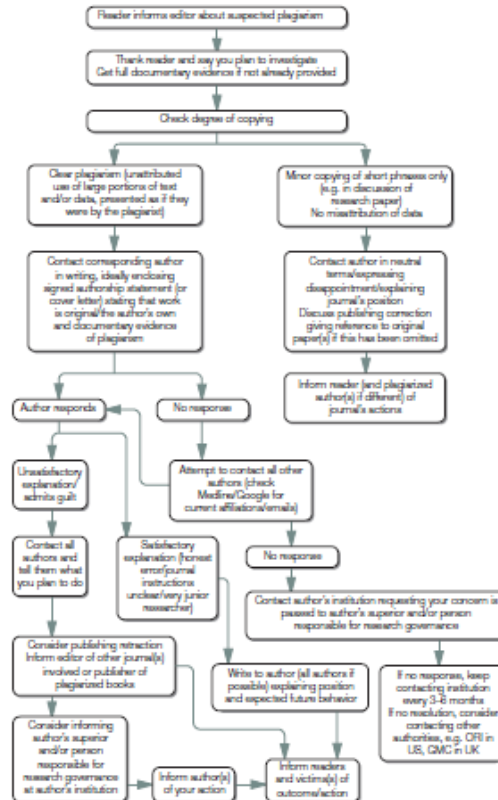
- Separate flowcharts for how to handle these problems before and after publication
- Summarize Code of Conduct and experience / advice from COPE Forums



COPE flowchart

C O P E COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect plagiarism (b) Suspected plagiarism in a published manuscript

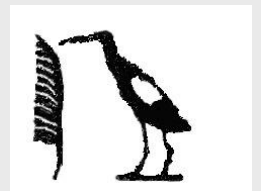


Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it

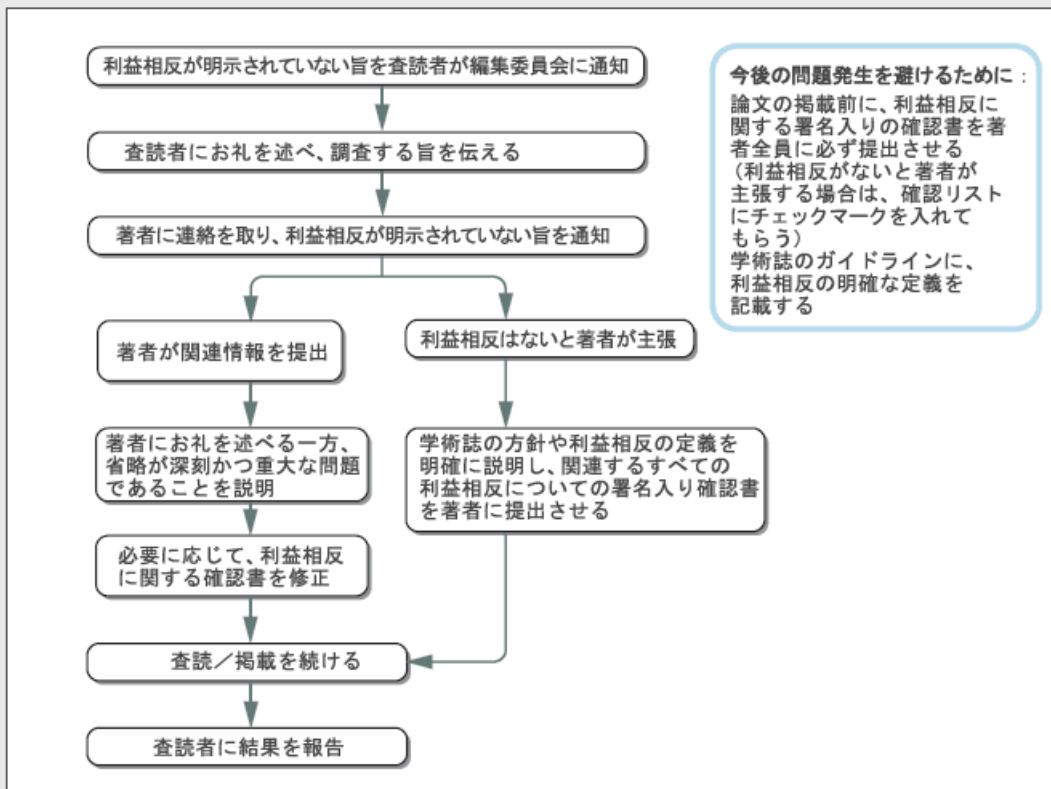
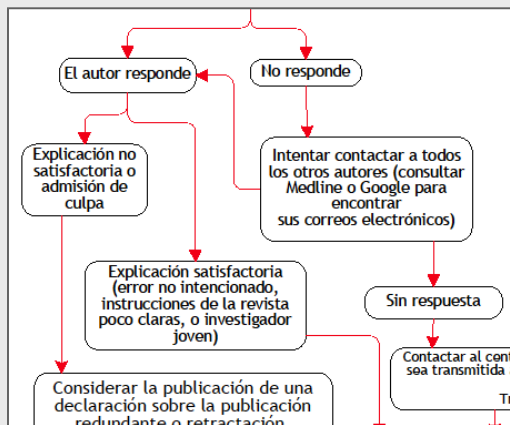
Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sitewise (www.sitewise.com) © 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

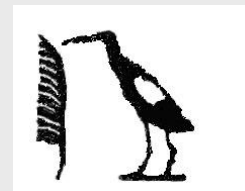
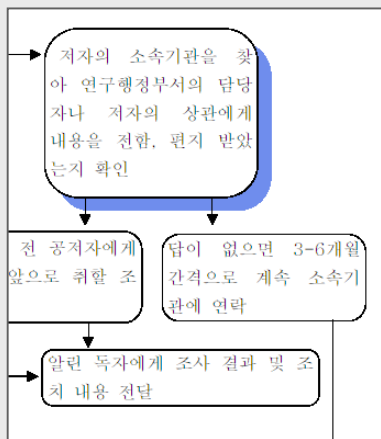
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The flowcharts have been translated into several languages



French
Spanish
Persian
Chinese
Italian
Polish
Japanese
Korean
Turkish
Arabic
Croatian
Portuguese

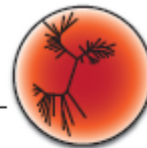


Principles for handling cases of suspected misconduct

1. Assess
2. Give an opportunity to explain
3. Seek an investigation
4. Protect readers from potentially misleading work
5. Have clear journal policies & processes
6. Educate authors and reviewers

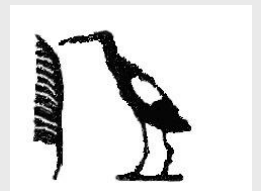
JOURNAL OF MICROBIOLOGY & BIOLOGY EDUCATION, December 2014, p. 146-150
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.v15i2.829>

**Theme:
Scientific Ethics**



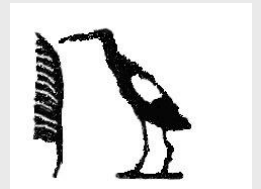
How Should Journal Editors Respond to Cases of Suspected Misconduct?

Elizabeth Wager
Publications Consultant, Sideview, Princes Risborough HP27 9DE, UK



Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers

- Developed in 2011
- Many publishers support (pay for) journals to be COPE members
- They should encourage them to follow the Code for Editors
- And respect editorial independence





RETRACTION GUIDELINES

Journal of Critical Care (2009) 24, 620–622



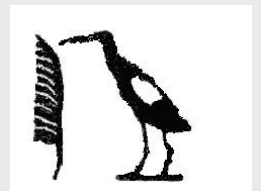
ELSEVIER

**Journal of
Critical Care**

Retractions: Guidance from the Committee on Publication Ethics

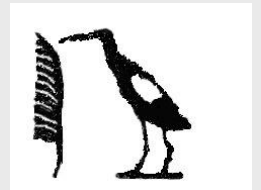
Retractions: Guidance from
the Committee on Publication
Ethics (COPE)

Elizabeth Wager, Virginia Barbour, Steven Yentis,
Sabine Kleinert
on behalf of COPE Council



Why did we need guidelines on retraction?

- Some editors seem reluctant to retract
- Some retraction statements are unclear (?misconduct / honest error)
- Some retracted articles are not properly labelled
- Some editors retract inappropriately (eg for authorship disputes)



Journals don't always retract unreliable papers

Poehlman case

- March 2005: ORI announced that 10 articles contain fabricated data
- November 2005: only 5/10 articles had been retracted
- Rennie & Sox *Ann Int Med* 2006;**144**:609-13

“Editors who fail to retract undo the hard work of investigating panels and negate the courage of the whistleblower”



Update on Poehlman case

Of the 10 papers identified as fraudulent by ORI

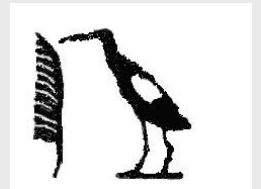
- 1 is not on Medline, can't trace journal
- 6/9 have been retracted
- 1 has no comment in the journal
(*Coronary Artery Disease*)
- 1 has an erratum (*Am J Physiol*)
- 1 has a comment (*Obesity Res*)
(=letter from Poehlman received March 05,
published July 05)



Not much sign of improvement

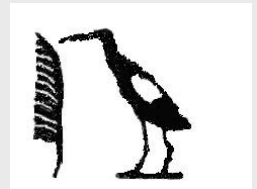
Boldt case

- Feb 2011: Rheinland-Pfalz State Medical Association requested retraction of 88 articles because of lack of ethical approval
- Jan 2013: 9 articles remain unretracted
- Only 5/79 retractions met all COPE guidelines (e.g. 6 articles unmarked despite retraction notice)
- Elia, Wager & Tramèr, *PLoS One* 2014;**9**:e85846



Effect of Boldt's publications

- Effects of type of resuscitation solution (hydroxyethyl starch) in critically ill patients
- Including Boldt's publications – HES looks OK
- Excluding Boldt's publications – increased deaths
- *“After exclusion of 7 trials performed by an investigator whose research has been retracted because of scientific misconduct, hydroxyethyl starch was associated with a significant increased risk of mortality and acute kidney injury. Clinical use of hydroxyethyl starch for acute volume resuscitation is not warranted due to serious safety concerns.”*
- Zarychanski et al. *JAMA* 2013;**309**:678-88



Examples of unclear wording

- ‘important irregularities’
- ‘the authors no longer stand by their results’
- ‘retraction is being done for legal reasons’
- ‘to eliminate incorrect information’

Retraction Watch

Tracking retractions process

Crystal unclear? “Business decision” forces retraction of silicon paper

Leave a comment >

A group of researchers in Tokyo has lost their 2013 article in the *Journal of Crystal Growth* over commercial interests — which don't appear to be their own.

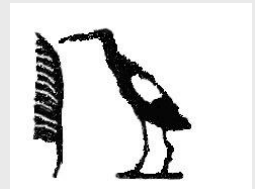
We'll explain.

The article, “Interactions between planar defects in bulk 3C-SiC,” came from a team consisting of a researcher at Keio University and scientists at two companies, HOYA Corporation, an [optics](#) firm, and [SICOXS Corporation](#), which makes semiconductor wafers.

According to the [abstract](#): [Read the rest of this entry >](#)

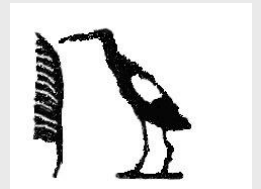


Retraction Watch lists euphemisms eg for plagiarism



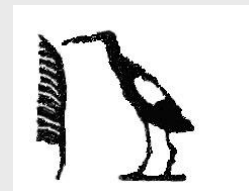
Correcting the record

- Corrections
- Retractions
- Expressions of Concern
- *“The main purpose of retractions is to correct the literature and ensure its integrity rather than to punish authors who misbehave”*
COPE retraction guidelines



Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases

- Recognizes different responsibilities of journals and institutions
- Reflects problems journals sometimes have (e.g. when institutions will not share information about investigations)

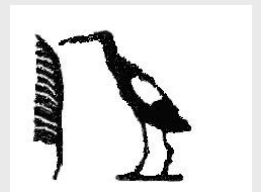


Cooperation & Liaison between Universities & Editors (CLUE)

- Working to develop further guidance

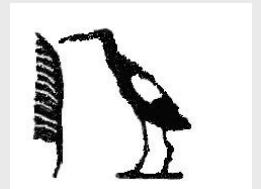


CLUE workshop participants at EMBO in Heidelberg, Germany.



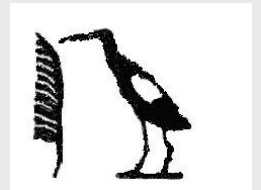
Sharing information among editors regarding possible misconduct

- Guidelines published 2015
- Developed by Steve Yentis, Editor *Anaesthesia* following Boldt and Fujii cases



Guidelines for peer reviewers

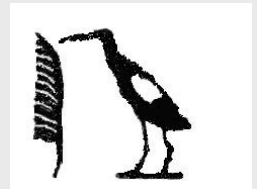
- Published 2013
- Currently being revised
- 9 basic principles
- Detailed expectations on invitation, during review and after review



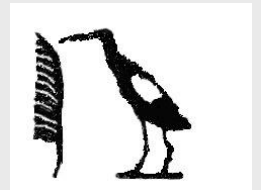
Principles of transparency and best practice in scholarly publishing

(COPE, DOAJ, OASPA, WAME)

- Directory of Open Access Journals
- Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association
- World Association of Medical Editors
- 1st published 2014, revised June 2015
- Based on DOAJ membership criteria
- Response to predatory publishers



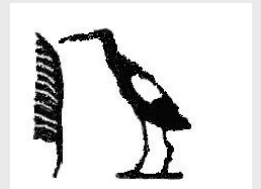
- Any fees should be clearly stated
- Ownership and management should be clearly indicated
- Journal name should not be one that is easily confused with another journal or potentially misleading
- Website should not attempt to mimic another journal/publisher's site
- Direct marketing should be “appropriate, well targeted and unobtrusive”



Text recycling guidelines

COPE/ BioMed Central

- Text recycling = when authors re-use text from their own work
- Redundant (duplicate) publication refers to “a larger problem” of “repeated publication of data or ideas”

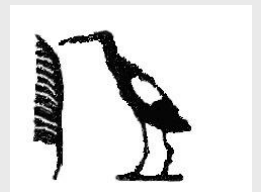


Responsible research publication: international standards for authors

A position statement developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity,
Singapore, July 22-24, 2010

Elizabeth Wager & Sabine Kleinert

- **Summary**
- The research being reported should have been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner and should comply with all relevant legislation.
- Researchers should present their results clearly, honestly, and without fabrication, falsification or inappropriate data manipulation.
- Researchers should strive to describe their methods clearly and unambiguously so that their findings can be confirmed by others.
- Researchers should adhere to publication requirements that submitted work is original, is not plagiarised, and has not been published elsewhere.
- Authors should take collective responsibility for submitted and published work.
- The authorship of research publications should accurately reflect individuals' contributions to the work and its reporting.
- Funding sources and relevant conflicts of interest should be disclosed.



and for editors ...

Responsible research publication: international standards for editors

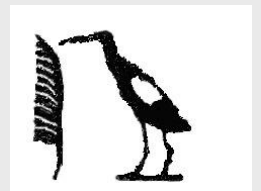
*A position statement developed at the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity,
Singapore, July 22-24, 2010*

Sabine Kleinert & Elizabeth Wager

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liz@sideview.demon.co.uk

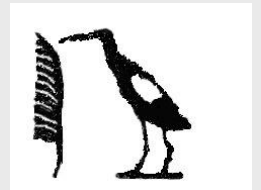
Summary

- Editors are accountable and should take responsibility for everything they publish
- Editors should make fair and unbiased decisions independent from commercial consideration and ensure a fair and appropriate peer review process
- Editors should adopt editorial policies that encourage maximum transparency and complete, honest reporting
- Editors should guard the integrity of the published record by issuing corrections and retractions when needed and pursuing suspected or alleged research and publication misconduct
- Editors should pursue reviewer and editorial misconduct
- Editors should critically assess the ethical conduct of studies in humans and animals
- Peer reviewers and authors should be told what is expected of them
- Editors should have appropriate policies in place for handling editorial conflicts of interest



Key points

- COPE has produced several guidelines (alone and with other organizations)
- All are freely available on the COPE website www.publicationethics.org
- All published under a CC-BY-NC-ND licence



Editors should

- Be familiar with the COPE guidelines
- Raise awareness among editorial board members and journal staff
- Incorporate them into journal policies
- Encourage authors to follow International Standards (?cite in journal instructions)
- Encourage reviewers to follow COPE guidelines (?provide link)

