Ethical Issues in Scientific Publications; Aims and Perspectives of COPE

By:
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A: Misconducts

- Authorship disputes
- Conflict of interest
- Double submission, redundant publication...

B: Fraud

- Plagiarism
- Data fabrication
- Data falsification
Reasons of ethical misbehavior

Intentional
(Pressure to publish)

Lack of Knowledge
• Lack of Knowledge

• Many researchers do not know what can be considered as a misconduct

• Many members of editorial boards do not know the exact definition of various misconducts

• Many editors do not know how to tackle the misconducts
To tackle the problem

Short term approach to gain rapid response

Long term approach to make fundamentals
Short Term Approach

- Constructed congresses, seminars, workshops should be designed for faculty members, researchers and policy makers.
- Workshops can cover a gist of what a researcher, an editorial board member, and a policymaker should know about ethical issues.
Long Term Approach

- Designing a specific academic course covering ethical issues to make them familiar with the various types of ethical misconducts and international guidelines for ethical publishing.
- In this way articles are published with lower ethical problems.
Trained researchers have learned the impact of Col, fabricated/falsified data, plagiarism ... and how they should be prevented.

They have learned which publication is considered as "Redundant" and how to avoid that.
Conclusion

- Academic Training can at least treat the “lack of knowledge” cause of ethical misbehavior among editors and researchers.
- It can change the trend of journal publishing and management.
- It can also increase the standards of ethical publishing in journal offices.
The Impact of Ethical Misconduct

- Famous Cases of Fraud
Jan Hendrik Schön
Germany, Physics, semiconductors

Falsified and fabricated data in numerous publications
In 2001 he published new articles every 8 days!!

16 affected articles in *Science* and *Nature* 2000/01 alone

Investigation report in Sept 2002

Doctorate revoked in 2004, Schön appealed but the state court approved the decision in 2011
Jon Sudbø
Norwegian dentist, physician, researcher, oncologist
Oral cancer, associate professor in Uni of Oslo

In 2005 published in the Lancet: Ibuprofen can diminish oral cancer risk in smokers
900 fictitious subjects, of them 250 had a same birth date.
Commission report June 2006: 15 of his 38 articles were fraudulent
His dissertation was also based on fraud
Licence to practice & doctorate revoked
Woo Suk Hwang

South Korea

Stem cell cloning

Data fabrication and violation of bioethics laws

Involved 2 major Science papers 2004 and 2005

Investigation report Jan 2006

Charged with fraud and embezzlement
“Promoting integrity in research publication”
The history of COPE

- Began in 1997 (by three editors; BMJ, Lancet, Gut) as an informal forum for editors in the UK to discuss ethical issues related to research and publication in biomedical journal publishing.

- In 2007-08 was established as a limited company and a UK-registered charity.

- In 2007-08 membership increased from ~350 editors to ~3500 (as publishers started to sign up their journals).
Today …

• COPE currently has about 7000 members and is international in its reach and membership

• All academic disciplines are covered

• 18 Council members from 11 countries

• All academic disciplines and fields are now covered, for example:
  – Biomedicine
  – Pure and applied sciences
  – Engineering and technology
  – Arts, humanities and social sciences
Today …

- **International Advisory Board**
  - As local point of contact to advise and assist COPE in its work to support editors and publishers of peer-reviewed journals in all aspects of publication ethics.
  - 14 members from various countries including Russia
COPE

- COPE provides advice and resources to editors and publishers on all aspects of publication ethics
- Work is guided by an elected Council
- Council members are trustees of COPE as a charity and also directors as COPE is a limited company
- Day-to-day management of COPE’s business affairs is the responsibility of the permanent staff (Operations Manager, Natalie Ridgeway, and Administrator, Linda Gough)
- Specific projects are managed by various committees
Promoting integrity in research publication

COPE is a forum for editors and publishers of peer reviewed journals to discuss all aspects of publication ethics. It also advises editors on how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct. Read more about COPE...

FEATURED

FORUM DISCUSSION TOPIC: Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct

The Forum discussion topic on Wednesday 4 September is “Sharing of information among editors-in-chief regarding possible misconduct”. Click below to learn more and leave your comments.

Learn more

NEWS & OPINION view all

News / COPE's eLearning course relaunched

27/8/2013 7.50am

COPE is delighted to announce the relaunch of the eLearning programme on the COPE website. COPE members can now access the programme directly on the COPE website http://publicationethics.org/resources/elearning once they have logged in.

News / Clarification of COPE advice to editors on Geopolitical intrusions on editorial decisions

1/8/2013 6.11am

There has been much discussion recently on government, specifically US government, sanctions against Iran, the potential effect on Iranian researchers and some publishers have cautioned editors and reviewers about handling papers from Iran.
COPE in action: guidance documents

COPE has produced guidelines:

- Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guide for Journal Editors
- Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers
- Guidelines for Retracting Articles
- Guidelines for the Board of Directors of Learned Society Journals
COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

Irene Hames on behalf of COPE Council
March 2013, v.1

Peer review in all its forms plays an important role in ensuring the integrity of the scholarly record. The process depends to a large extent on trust, and requires that everyone involved behaves responsibly and ethically. Peer reviewers play a central and critical part in the peer-review process, but too often come to the role without any guidance and may be unaware of their ethical obligations. The COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers set out the basic principles and standards to which all peer reviewers should adhere during the peer-review process. It is hoped they will provide helpful guidance to researchers, be a reference for journals and editors in guiding their reviewers, and act as an educational resource for institutions in training their students and researchers.

Basic principles to which peer reviewers should adhere

Peer reviewers should:

• only agree to review manuscripts for which they have the subject expertise required to carry out a proper assessment and which they can assess in a timely manner

• respect the confidentiality of peer review and not reveal any details of a manuscript or its review, during or after the peer-review process, beyond those that are released by the journal

COPE in action: guidance documents

- Guidance for Editors on Research, Audit and Service Evaluations
- Sample letters for handling common problems
- A series of flowcharts (also available translated into Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Croatian, Japanese, Persian (Farsi) and Turkish – more planned)

All available at http://www.publicationethics.org
What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript

Reviewer (or editor) raises ethical concern about manuscript

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate

Author(s) supplies relevant details

- e.g. lack of ethical approval/concern re: patient consent or protection/concern re: animal experimentation

Satisfactory answer

- Apologise and continue review process

Unsatisfactory answer/no response

- Inform author that review process is suspended until case is resolved

Forward concerns to author's employer or person responsible for research governance at institution

Issue resolved satisfactory

- Inform reviewer about outcome of case

No/unsatisfactory response

- Contact institution at 3-6 monthly intervals, seeking conclusion of investigation

No/unsatisfactory response

Consider submitting case to COPE if it raises novel ethical issues
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: advice and guidance to members

COPE offers advice and guidance to its members, primarily through its quarterly **Forum meetings**:

- held in London but members worldwide can take part via telephone-conference
- allow members to benefit from the views and experiences of other members
- case summaries on the website (database of > 400 cases, searchable by year and keywords, some now recorded)
All the cases COPE has discussed since its inception in 1997 have been entered into a searchable database. This database now contains over 400 cases together with the advice given by COPE. For more recent cases, the database also includes follow-up information about outcome. We hope this database will provide a valuable resource for editors and those researching publication ethics.

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 word cloud below.

We encourage members to look at the database before submitting a case to the Forum to see if similar cases have already been discussed and to see the format used for presenting cases. However, please note that advice from the COPE Forum meetings is specific to the particular case under consideration and may not necessarily be applicable to similar cases either past or future.
Editors should be responsible for everything published in their journals. They should:

- Strive to meet the needs of readers and authors
- Constantly improve the journal
- Ensure the quality of the material they publish
- Champion freedom of expression
- Maintain the integrity of the academic record
- Preclude business needs from compromising intellectual standards
- Always be willing to publish corrections, clarifications, retractions and apologies when needed

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), Code of Conduct
COPE in action: Advice and guidance

• COPE does not adjudicate on the merits of individual cases (e.g., whether publication misconduct has occurred) but simply on whether the COPE member followed appropriate procedures.
COPE in action: 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 Ombudsman 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)
- **Annual seminar** (European, North American)
- Research Grants
- **Newsletter** (quarterly to monthly)
COPE: other services

- eLearning programme:
  To improve the editors’ abilities to deal with publication misconducts
  To give editors a deeper understanding of publication ethics and practical guidance on how to detect, prevent, and handle misconduct
COPE: other services

- eLearning programme:
- Introduction to publication ethics (free)
- Data fabrication
- Data falsification
- Conflict of interest
- Authorship
Introduction to Publication Ethics

Publication ethics and misconduct

This section provides an overview of what publication misconduct is.

Definitions

The US Office of Research Integrity defines misconduct quite narrowly as:
“...fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research,
or in reporting research results”
Source: http://ori.hhs.gov/misconduct-definition_misconduct.shtml

Others have used broader definitions, for example Nylen & Simonsen wrote:
“Scientific misconduct...is a continuum ranging from honest errors to outright fraud...The
research community must take a collective responsibility even for its deviants...Moving the
whole research community in the right direction should reduce the number of serious
COPE resource development

- eLearning modules in development:
  - Editor misconduct
  - Reviewer misconduct
  - Redundant publication
  - Selective reporting
  - Unethical research
COPE resource development

- Discussion documents in preparation:
  - Corrections (expanding on Retraction Guidelines)
  - Authorship
  - and Text recycling

- New and enhanced Flowcharts planned
COPE: other services

- Regional seminars: Shiraz seminar (in Iran) in Dec/2011 in collaboration with ISME,
- Brazil seminar
- Russia???
COPE contact details

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