

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)

Biteca-Ecuador
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Publication Ethics



I have no
Conflicts of or
Competing
Interests

Objectives

- Introduction to COPE
- Provide a roadmap to COPE resources
- Highlight current ethical dilemmas
- COPE Case discussions
- Questions and Answers



PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN SCHOLARLY
RESEARCH AND ITS PUBLICATION

COPE is registered as a charitable company limited by guarantee in the UK and was set up by a Memorandum of Association on 3 October 2007.

COPE's principal Objects are *"to educate and advance knowledge in methods of safeguarding the integrity of the scholarly record for the benefit of the public"*.

Small (but highly effective) staff and volunteer Trustee Board and Council
>14,000 members

Our members are primarily editors, but also publishers, universities and research institutes, and related organisations and individuals involved in publication ethics



WHAT DOES COPE DO?

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MISSION

To move the culture of publishing towards one where ethical practices become the norm.

Built around 3 Core Principles

- providing practical resources to educate and support our members
- providing leadership in thinking on publication ethics
- offering a neutral, professional voice in current debates

BY

Our approach is firmly in the direction of influencing through education, resources, and support of our members.

We do not enforce adherence to guidance although there are consequences for members that don't support the mission of COPE.

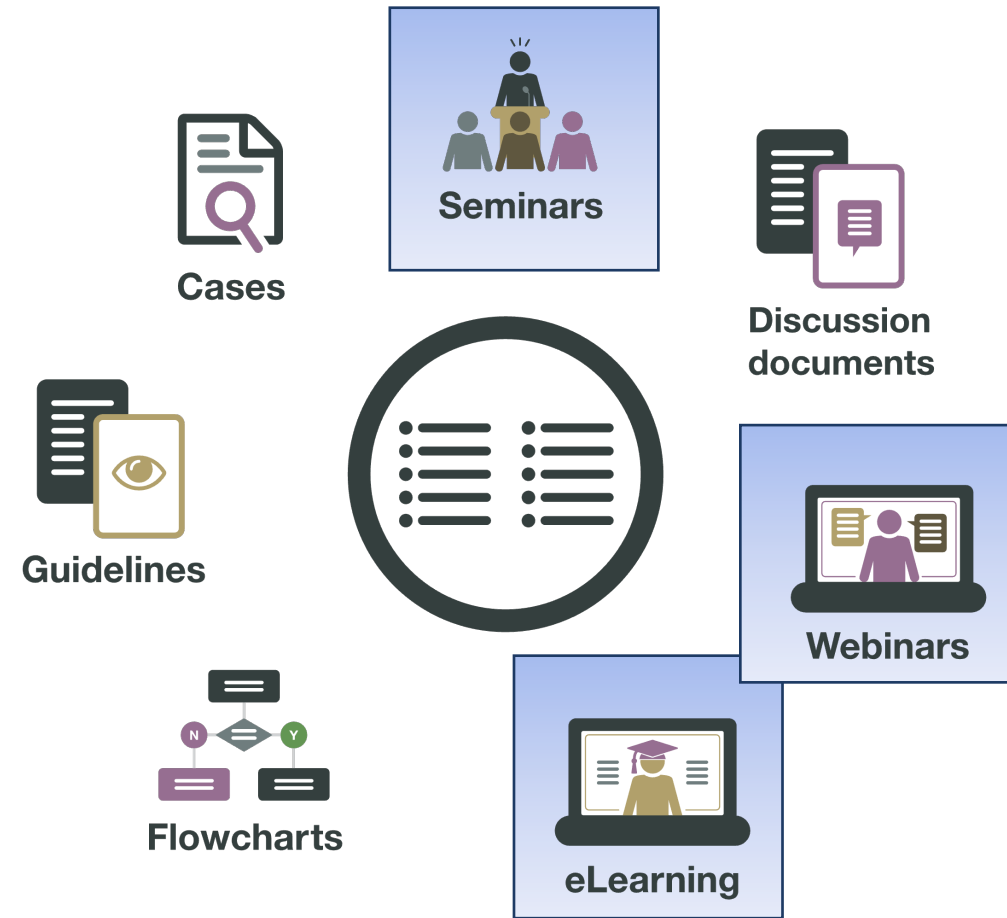


COPE RESOURCES

Examples of resources

From our Core practices and our guidelines to useful sample letters and flowcharts, COPE offers a range of useful tools for journal editors and publishers.

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GUIDANCE

- How to handle authorship disputes: A guide for new researchers
- Ethics toolkit for a successful editorial office
- Cooperation between research institutions and journals on research integrity cases



COPE CORE PRACTICES

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Expectations of all involved in publishing the scholarly literature with particular focus on editors and their journals, publishers and institutions. Journals and publishers should have robust and well described, publicly documented practices in all of the following areas for their journals



Allegations of misconduct



Authorship and contributorship



Complaints and appeals



Conflicts of interest/ Competing interests



Data and reproducibility



Ethical oversight



Intellectual property



Journal management



Peer review processes



Post-publication discussions and corrections

Each core practice contains links to relevant guidance, cases, sample letters



PROMOTING INTEGRITY IN SCHOLARLY RESEARCH AND ITS PUBLICATION

PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY AND BEST PRACTICE IN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING



Website



Name of journal



Peer review process



Ownership and management



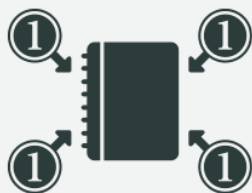


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PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY AND BEST PRACTICE IN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING



Archiving



Revenue sources



Advertising



Direct marketing





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PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY AND BEST PRACTICE IN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING



Governing body



Editorial team/
contact information



Copyright and
licensing



Author fees





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PRINCIPLES OF TRANSPARENCY AND BEST PRACTICE IN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING



Allegations of research misconduct



Publication ethics



Publishing schedule



Access





COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)

@publicationethics · 405 subscribers · 56 videos

Discussions and educational webinars on publication ethics issues and hot topics given by... >

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Claiming institutional affiliations, COPE Forum discussion

123 views · 1 month ago



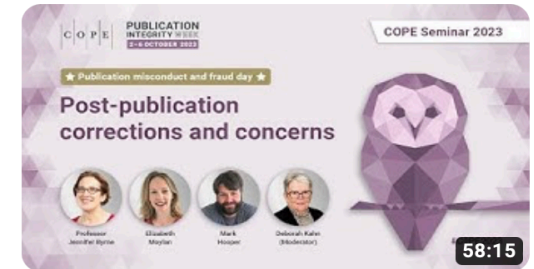
Ethical concerns in research on urbanisation: perspectives from the Global...

58 views · 3 months ago



Caste and publishing ethics: an ethics gap?

84 views · 3 months ago



Post-publication corrections

201 views · 3 months ago

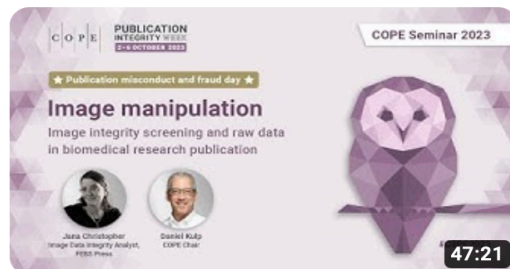
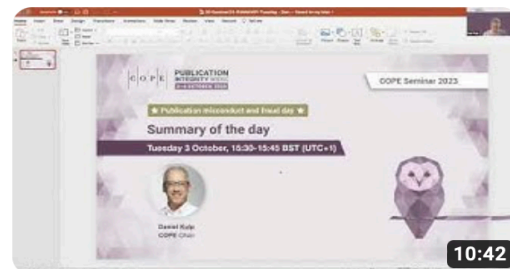


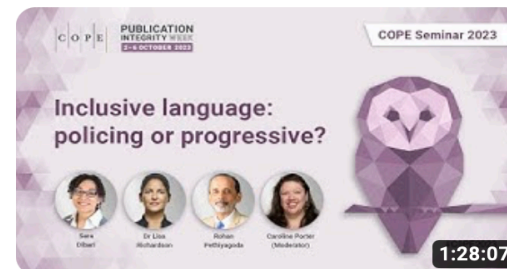
Image manipulation

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Summary of the day

11 views · 3 months ago



Inclusive language: policing or progressive?

164 views · 3 months ago



Publication misconduct and fraud day introduction

10 views · 3 months ago

| C | O | P | E |

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AUTHORSHIP ISSUES

Practical advice on common authorship issues and areas for further discussion.





Authorship Resources

Discussion Document

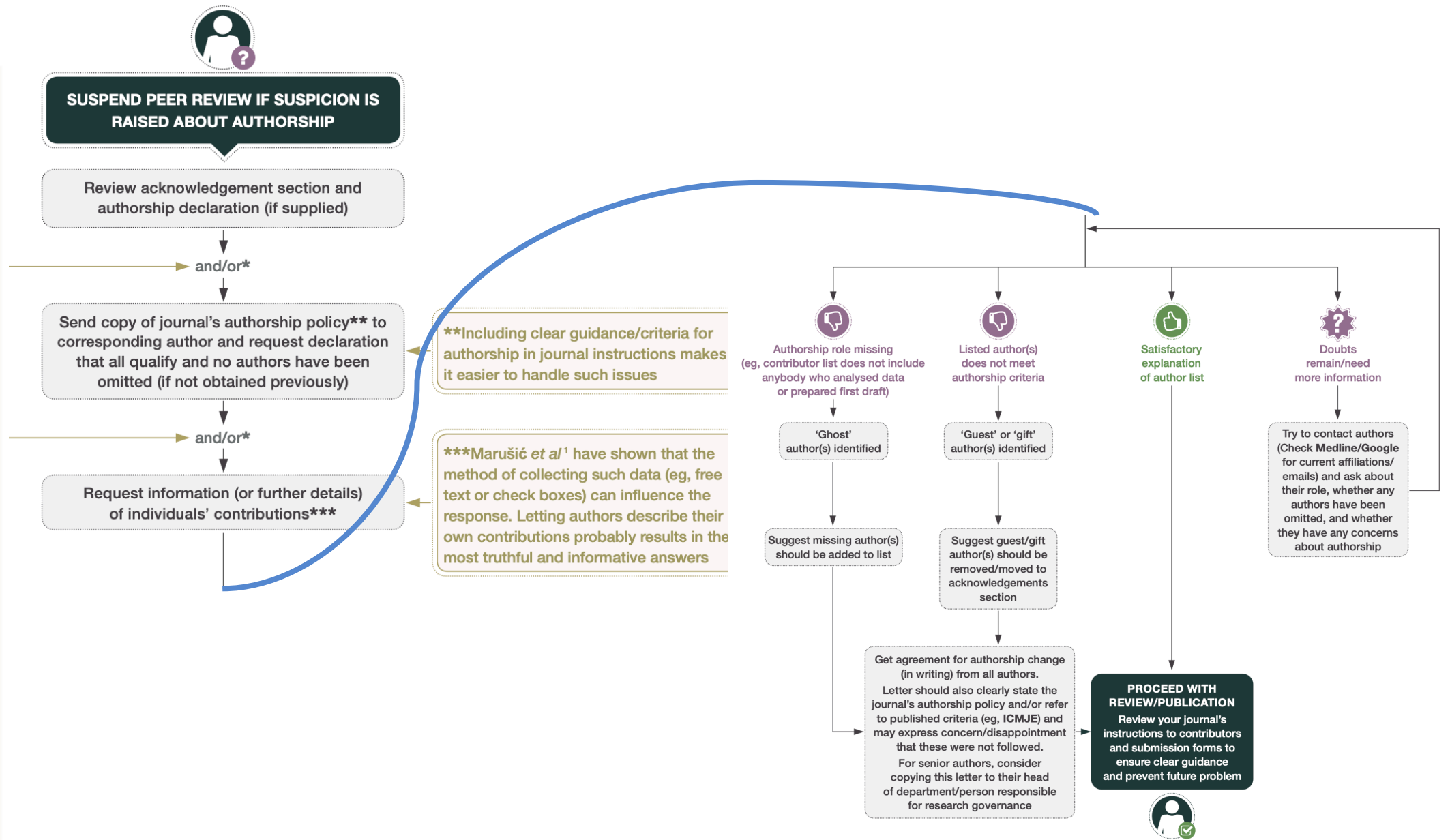
[https://publicationethics.org/
resources/discussion-documents/
authorship](https://publicationethics.org/resources/discussion-documents/authorship)

214 cases about Authorship

Authorship Flowcharts

- How to spot authorship problems
- Authorship and contributorship of unpublished data: Dealing with concerns
- Authorship and contributorship of published data: Dealing with concerns
- Ghost, guest or gift authorship in a submitted manuscript
- Change in authorship: removal of author-before publication
- Change in authorship: removal of author-after publication
- Changes in authorship: Addition of an extra author-before publication
- Changes in authorship: Addition of extra author-after publication

GHOST, GUEST, OR GIFT AUTHORSHIP IN A SUBMITTED MANUSCRIPT



Note: COPE transitioning to recommending that all listed authors are notified of issues simultaneously

RESOURCES FOR AUTHORS

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- **Negotiating authorship** (<https://bit.ly/2YbaHGX>):

A score sheet for quantifying contributions to a project to determine order of authorship.

- **Negotiating order of authorship** (<https://bit.ly/2LKUKAJ>):

Authorship tiebreaker scorecard used when 2 or more people achieve the same score on the authorship determination score sheet.

- **Contract among authors during project development** (<https://bit.ly/2Mo5Jzw>)

- **Contract among authors after publication/presentation agreed** (<https://bit.ly/2GzKgQk>)

- **NIH Guidelines for authorship contributions** (<https://bit.ly/314njwK>)

- **Working with third-party editing or medical communications companies:**

The international society for Medical Publication Professionals (isMPP); (<https://www.ismpp.org>) developed guidelines for medical writers working with authors on company-sponsored research (known as **Good Publication Practice** or **GPP**). These guidelines form the basis for enhanced transparency in working with third-party medical writers and editors (*Battisti WP, Wager E, Baltzer L, Bridges D, Cairns A, Carswell Cl, et al. Good Publication Practice for Communicating Company-Sponsored Medical Research: GPP3. Ann Intern Med.163:461 DOI:10.7326/M15-0288*).

Subsequently, the **American Medical Writers Association (AMWA)** and the **European Medical Writers Association (EMWA)**, with the **ISMPP**, released a position statement on the role and responsibilities of professional medical writers (<https://bit.ly/2ISgwqo>).



How to handle authorship disputes: a guide for new researchers

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- Authors should discuss authorship when planning research, agree authorship in writing, and revisit the agreement through stages of the research.
- Handle disagreements as they happen.
- Negotiate disputes and misconduct dispassionately, using facts and guidelines.
- Acknowledgements may be acceptable to a journal when contributions do not constitute authorship.
- Authors should describe what each author contributed to the research project.
- The order of authors should be decided jointly between the authors and make it clear the editor the reasons behind the author order.
- All authors should be listed.
- People should not be added as authors if they have not contributed significantly to the project.
- **Read the journal's instructions for authors as they can differ between journals.**

- Artificial intelligence
- Predatory journals
- Watchlists
- Preprints
- Conflicts of interest
- Manipulation of the peer review process
- Paper mills

**EXAMPLES OF
CURRENT AND
EMERGING ETHICAL
ISSUES**

AI tools cannot meet the requirements for **authorship** as they cannot take responsibility for the submitted work.

As non-legal entities, they cannot assert the presence or absence of conflicts of interest nor manage copyright and license agreements.

Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data, must be transparent in disclosing in the Materials and Methods (or similar section) of the paper how the AI tool was used and which tool was used.

Authors are fully responsible for the content of their manuscript, even those parts produced by an AI tool, and are thus liable for any breach of publication ethics.

- Profit oriented, unofficial criminal organizations that produce and sell fraudulent manuscripts that seem to resemble genuine research.
- May handle the administration of submitting the article to journals for review and sell authorship to researchers once the article is accepted for publication.
- Indications that manuscripts may be produced by a paper mill are more readily detected at scale as they may be similar in layout, experimental approach and have similar images or figures.
- Pressure to publish for researchers and for some it is necessary to advance their career, and in some countries use of such services are perceived to be less unacceptable.

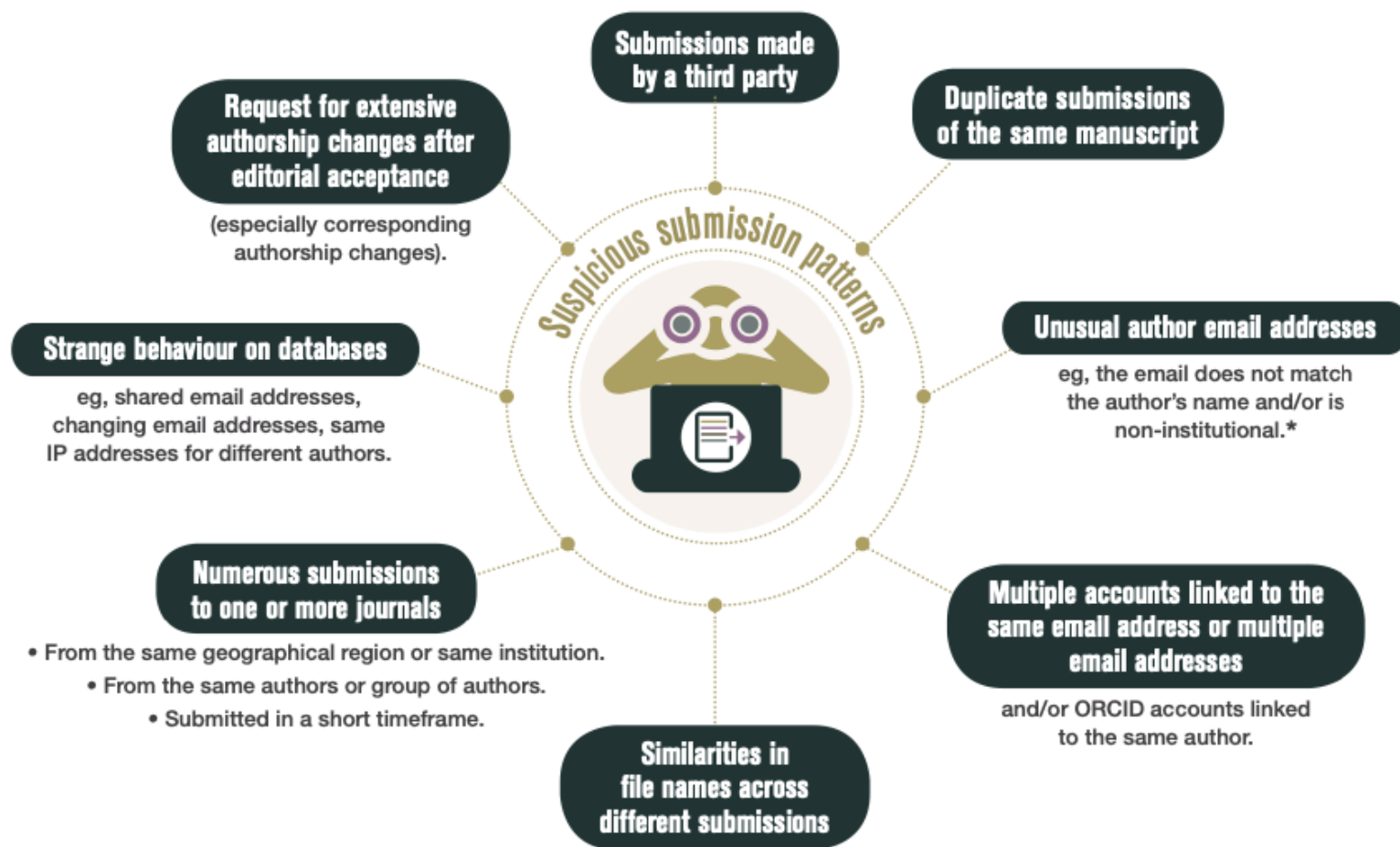


PAPER MILLS: What is the scale?

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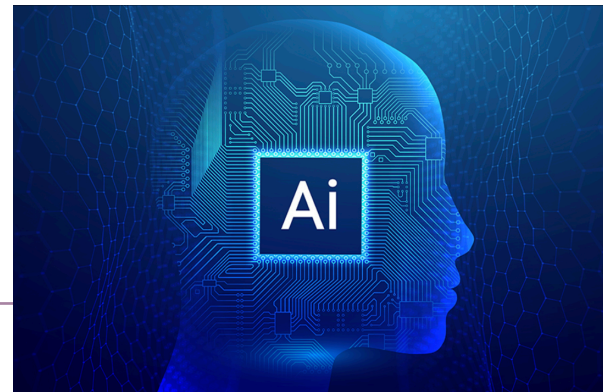
- Estimate that human gene literature contains >100,000 paper mill papers. (Jennifer Byrne)
 - Paper Mills and Research Misconduct: Facing the Challenges of Scientific Publishing [House Science, Space, and Technology Committee](#) 117th Congress (2021-2022)
 - <https://www.congress.gov/event/117th-congress/house-event/115022/text>
- Single publisher retracted almost 500 papers after discovering they were from paper mills
 - <https://retractionwatch.com/2022/09/09/physics-publisher-retracting-nearly-500-likely-paper-mill-papers/>
- Wiley retracted 511 paper mill papers and assessing 1200 others
- **Solutions will need to be at scale, across publishers and journals**
 - <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2023/04/04/guest-post-addressing-paper-mills-and-a-way-forward-for-journal-security/>
- STM Integrity Hub
 - Aims to provide a cloud-based environment for publishers to check *submitted* articles for research integrity issues
 - <https://www.stm-assoc.org/stm-integrity-hub/>

Suspicious submission patterns



* The use of non-institutional emails is common amongst authors and this feature should be considered in the context of other findings and should not be considered a sign of publication manipulation in isolation.

- Publishing
 - Assigning paper to correct journal
 - Screening for plagiarism, image manipulation, papermills
 - Requires human oversight
- <https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/ai-in-decision-making-discussion-doc.pdf>



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As non-legal entities, they cannot assert the presence or absence of conflicts of interest nor manage copyright and license agreements.

Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data, must be transparent in disclosing in the Materials and Methods (or similar section) of the paper how the AI tool was used and which tool was used.

Authors are fully responsible for the content of their manuscript, even those parts produced by an AI tool, and are thus liable for any breach of publication ethics.

- United2Act is committed to addressing the collective challenge of paper mills in scholarly publishing.
- Paper mills are a real threat to the integrity of the scholarly record. Collective effort is needed because no individual stakeholder can solve this problem alone.



<https://united2act.org>

Launched Jan 19, 2024



1. Education and awareness

To create new educational tools and resources, and to promote education and awareness activities to make researchers, journal editors, reviewers, journals, and publishers aware of the problem of paper mills.



3. Research paper mills

To work with interested parties to facilitate and organise research to be carried out on paper mills, with particular attention to regional and subject specific aspects.



2. Improve post-publication corrections

To investigate and agree ways to improve communication with those who report misconduct to journals, and to agree ways in which the correction of the literature can be speeded up when misconduct is discovered.



4. Enable the development of trust markers

To work with the various suppliers who are developing tools which verify the identity of authors, reviewers, and editors to ensure that the solutions work for the variety of authors and author purpose.



5. Continue to facilitate dialogue between stakeholders about the systematic manipulation of the publication process

To continue to bring together the many voices in this area through joint projects and initiatives.



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COPE RESOURCES

Translated resources

COPE is working towards translating more resources to allow communication with a wider audience.



Chinese



Croatian



German



Italian



Japanese



Persian



Polish



Portuguese



South Korean



Spanish



Turkish



Case 1

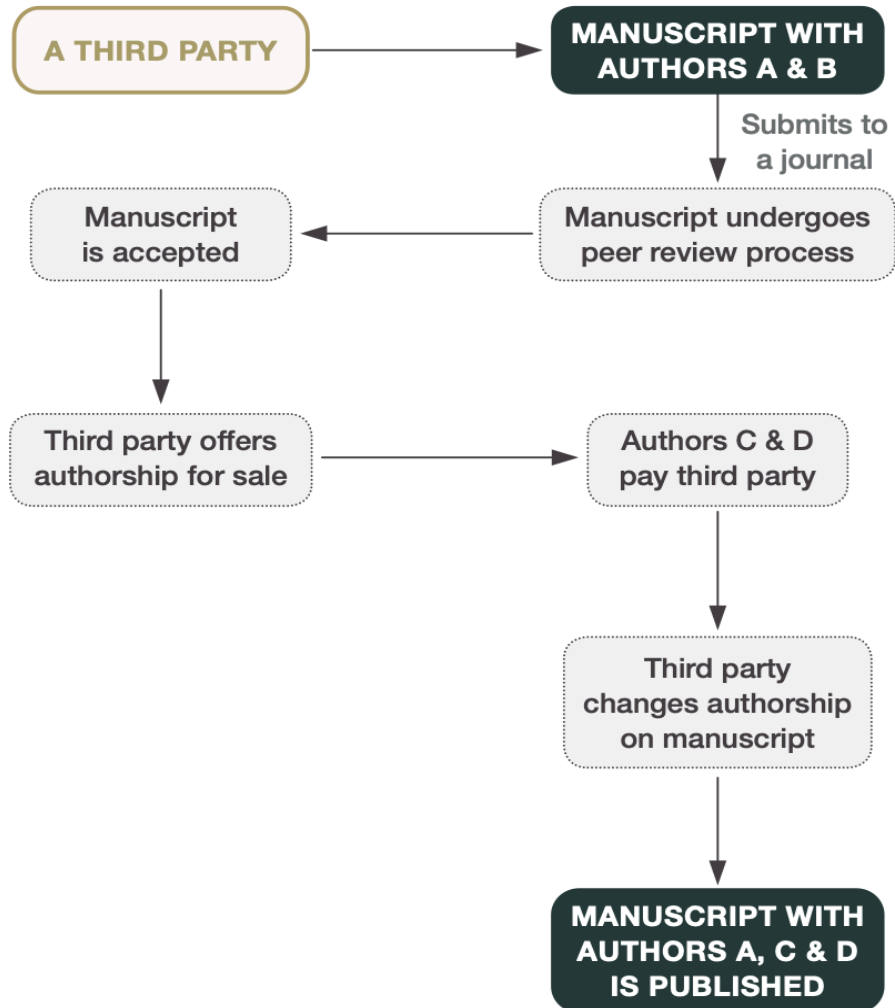
We have been approached via email by a company promoting authorship for sale. The email describes the service as providing 'co-authorship' of an existing article that has been submitted for publication in an indexed journal. The articles cover a range of disciplines and the company claims a high success rate for publication.

Question for COPE Council:

- What steps should publishers take in cases of such overt promotion of paper mills?

Fig 2.

An example of authorship for sale



All members of publication Team (Copyeditors, editors, managers)
Need to be aware of this sort of problem.

Another flag is a request to change a large Portion of the paper after acceptance.

- <https://publicationethics.org/resources/flowcharts/systematic-manipulation-publication-process>

Case 1

- Ignore them
- Circulate to editorial team/publishers to increase awareness
- Be clear in author guidelines/websites journal doesn't work with 3rd parties in this way.
- Consider note on website to warn potential authors of this problem
- Alert editorial team to look out for requests to change authorship late in the process
- If company is using journal's logo without permission, consider infringement action
- If your publisher is a member of COPE, they can discuss on COPE Publisher forum

Case 2

- Journal A published an article on line and was contacted by a scholar saying that they, while included in the acknowledgements, should have been listed as an author. They requested being added to the author list.
- Journal A contacted the corresponding author who stated that the author did not meet criteria for authorship.
- Scholar insisted they should be added and Journal A advised them to communicate with authors and reach an agreement, or contact the institution to resolve the problem.
- Scholar indicated they could not do this as they didn't know all the authors who were at different institutions.

Questions for the Forum

- How can publishers protect the rights of authors in response to such disputes?
- What should publishers value when the facts are not clear?
- Does COPE have any better suggestions or opinions on this case?



The Forum agreed that the publisher has handled this situation correctly by following COPE guidance on authorship. It is not the publisher's role to make judgements on authorship; only authors' institutions are able to examine what happened in the production of the article. The fact that this putative author is not willing to engage with the institution is in itself a warning sign. The journal should ensure that the criteria for authorship are made clear in their author instructions, whether that is the [ICMJE guidelines](#), [NISO's CRediT taxonomy](#), or some other system.

Example Tools for Journals

ICMJE AUTHORSHIP CRITERIA

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
 - Drafting the work or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content; AND
 - Final approval of the version to be published; AND
 - Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.
-
- All individuals who meet these criteria should be authors

<https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

CRedit Taxonomy

Conceptualization	Resources
Data Curation	Software
Formal analysis	Supervision
Funding acquisition	Validation
Investigation	Visualization
Methodology	Writing original draft
Project administration	Editing and reviewing

<https://credit.niso.org>

GUIDANCE FOR EDITORS

The specifics might vary somewhat by discipline, but all journals should have a basic policy on what they consider qualifies someone to be an author of a research paper (as opposed to someone whose contribution should be acknowledged). This policy should be stated clearly in the journal's information for authors. If the policy is based on the **ICMJE**, **CSE**, or some other group, that should be stated, along with any modifications. Journals should also consider requiring that all named authors sign a statement of authorship as a condition of publication. Such a statement should ideally include:

- Attestation that each signatory fulfills the authorship criteria laid out in the journal's authorship policy
- A declaration that no other individuals deserving of authorship have been omitted
- A statement of the contributions of each signatory (journals might also consider publishing this information)
- A declaration that the signatory takes responsibility for the integrity of those contributions.

https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/COPE_DD_A4_Authorship_SEPT19_SCREEN_AW.pdf

Editors are not in a position to fairly adjudicate disputes, nor should they capitulate to threats and bullying by the authors involved in those disputes. Although the editorial office typically communicates with the corresponding author, for purposes of transparency, it is good practice to cc all co-authors on correspondence related to authorship disputes or missing statements of competing interests and funding.

Case 3

• 23-08

We are handling a manuscript that is now ready for acceptance. During the review process we noticed that one coauthor had the surname "999" and this coauthor and two others had the affiliation "Independent researcher". We asked the corresponding author what this meant. Their answer was that the names of two of these three authors, including "999", were pseudonyms. The paper was based on a competition, and the corresponding author explained that they had utilised pseudonyms when participating as they had taken part as independent researchers working on personal interests outside their company office hours. They wish to continue to do so even upon receiving recognition. They stated that they fulfill ICMJE's authorship criteria and are real individuals. They welcome advice on how to proceed should pseudonyms not be appropriate.

Questions

- Can coauthors use a pseudonym on a published paper?
- If yes, do the given circumstances justify this?
- If yes, should the pseudonymous authors reveal their real identities to the editor?

Advice

- COPE Council was unanimous in their feeling that the use of pseudonyms is not warranted in this case. Transparency and accountability are key in scholarly publishing and readers should know who authored the paper and are responsible for it. Transparent authorship is also necessary for the full disclosure of potential conflicts of interest and bias. If necessary the authors could state that the work was done independently of their institution, but their affiliation should still be disclosed, either with their name, or in a COI statement. If the latter course is taken then it is up to the journal to decide whether this should be made public, or whether the author/s can be listed as independent researcher/s.
- There are cases where it is appropriate for authors to use pseudonyms but this would be where making their identity public could lead to scenarios like arrests or violence against them, and that does not seem to be the case here. Even in scenarios like these, however, the Editor in Chief should still be informed of the authors' names. In cases where authors feel that disclosing their names could violate work agreements (for example, non-competes) then this should be referred to them to work out, possibly in collaboration with their employer to ensure internal compliance.
- Using pseudonyms may also create procedural complications for journals, such as how to link ORCID ids to the authors, so if a journal is to support such a move then it must be fully confident that there are risks to the authors which justify masking their identities.
- If the publisher does not have text in their guidelines on this then it may be helpful to consider developing some, for example, along the lines of 'No fictitious name should be listed as an author or coauthor.'

Follow up

- The journal sought advice from their legal team who recommended that pseudonymous authorship would only be considered on a case-by-case basis, and where the content related to a highly sensitive area, or if there was a genuine threat to the safety of the author. In the current situation the request should be addressed via a conflict of interest statement at the end of the article or a statement saying that the author's views are not connected to their employer is what we would need to do. Authors being in dispute with their employer or wanting to distance themselves from their employer, privacy concerns, or controversial content would not be considered acceptable reasons for using a pseudonym.
- The editor suggested to the authors that a statement be added to the article saying that the research is unconnected to their employer and does not reflect the views of their employer

Case 4

An author informed the journal that they had unintentionally neglected to declare a conflict of interest on all of the five articles that they had published in the journal between 2019 and 2022. They had been made aware of this on social media, in the context of a widespread movement to discredit members of an emerging healthcare profession that they represent. They had not benefited financially from the undisclosed conflict of interest and were happy to work with the journal to correct the scholarly record. The content of all five papers was about the particular healthcare professional group, and the conflict was that the author was the director of a recruitment organisation for that group.

he comments on social media, but there is a need to respond to the publisher's internal stakeholders.

The journal is receiving attacks on social media as part of a wider campaign against the particular profession, saying that the articles should be retracted as the conflict of interest invalidates their content, and that their continued presence as part of the scholarly record is part of a wider conspiracy by the journal and its publisher to promote that healthcare professional group in a biased and unevidenced manner.

The editorial independence of the journal from its publisher, and the reputations of both the journal and its publisher, are receiving repeated defamations on social media. This has led to calls by some internal stakeholders of the publisher for further review of the process followed.

This case submitted to COPE forms part of that review. The journal has not engaged with any of the comments on social media, but there is a need to respond to the publisher's internal stakeholders.

The journal followed the COPE process for undeclared conflicts of interest in a published article, including contacting the original handling editor, who accessed the reviewer reports and confirmed that the conflict of interest would not have affected the decision to publish any of the articles. Each article was corrected to include the conflict of interest and the journal published a corrigendum to draw attention to the corrected articles.

QUESTIONS

- Does the combination of previously undeclared conflict of interest and current controversy mean that the journal needs to take further action?
- If so, what should this action be?
- Does the particular nature of this conflict of interest (the author's status as the director of a recruitment organisation for the healthcare professional group) change the status?
- Does the fact that the conflict was only declared after social media identification change the status?

ADVICE

- While it is distressing to be subjected to public criticism, it is usually unwise to engage in further dialogue because it may encourage the critics further. The journal has done all it can by putting out a statement and following COPE guidance.
- If the attacks are defamatory then the journal could take legal counsel, although this carries a risk of inflaming the situation further,
- The journal could also consider actions to protect their team, especially if individuals are being publicly targeted or named. For example, they could review their complaints processes to deanonymise all contacts, and ensure that all decisions are made by a panel rather than an individual. They can also ensure that all team members know the complaints procedures and reiterate the importance of following them.

THANK YOU

