Publication – the role of editors and journals

Current best practices

Liz Wager; presented to the World Conference on Research Integrity, Lisbon, Portugal; September 2007
What can editors do?

- Detect
- Prevent
- Educate
- Promote
- Inform
What can editors do?

• Detect research and publication misconduct
• Prevent publication misconduct
• Educate authors
• Promote good practice
  – be aware of how journal policies may influence behaviour
• Inform authorities, employers
What editors CANNOT do

• Prevent research misconduct
• Investigate research misconduct
• Settle disputes (e.g. authorship)
• Investigate most types of publication misconduct

• although they may instigate investigations
Misconduct: definitions

Research misconduct
- Fabrication
- Falsification
- Unethical research

Publication misconduct
- Plagiarism
- Biased/selective reporting
- Authorship abuse
- Redundant publication
- Undeclared CoI
- Reviewer misconduct
- Abuse of position

Editors can't turn back the clock
Organizations concerned about publication ethics

COPE: Committee on Publication Ethics
WAME: World Assoc of Medical Editors
CSE: Council of Science Editors
ICMJE: Intnl Cttee of Med Jnl Editors
Relevant guidelines

• **COPE**: Code of Conduct, Best Practice, Flow charts
• **ICMJE**: Uniform Requirements
• **WAME**: Policy statements, Recommendations on publication ethics
• **CSE**: Policy statements, White papers
Other guidelines
(not from/for editors)

• Good Publication Practice for pharmaceutical companies (GPP)
  www.gpp-guidelines.org

• European/American Medical Writers Association guidelines (EMWA, AMWA)
  www.emwa.org  www.amwa.org

• Declaration of Helsinki (WMA)
  http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm
## What do the guidelines cover?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of editor</th>
<th>Role of reviewer</th>
<th>Peer review</th>
<th>Advertising</th>
<th>Media relations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COPE</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICMJE</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAME</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
<td>🟩</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1: Policies for journals/editors
## What do the guidelines cover?

### 2: Policies for authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Redundant pub.</th>
<th>Plagiarism</th>
<th>Fabrication</th>
<th>Unethical research</th>
<th>Col</th>
<th>Authorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Committee on Publication Ethics
Editors have been influential in:

• Declaring competing interests
• Ensuring by-line reflects contributions
  – Preventing ghost / guest authorship
  – Defining role of professional writers
• Reducing publication bias by encouraging trial registration
New trials registered at clinicaltrials.gov
May – Oct 2005

Currently contains >40,000 trials

ICMJE deadline
Problems

• Little data on incidence of publication misconduct
• Hard to identify real trends
• Instruction is not enough
• Editors need to work with academic institutions, funders, regulators …
Room for improvement

• Some journals / editors lead the way (especially biomedical)
• Others have little interest in/ knowledge of publication ethics
• Need to train editors
• Need to fund research, training and promotion
Figure 1. The number of words devoted to the 4 major categories by each journal. Note how few words are devoted to scientific content. See Table 1 for details about the 18 subcategories.
Challenges

• Editors are busy people (dual commitment)
• Reviewers are over-stretched / volunteers (can't ask them to do more)
• Many initiatives cost time/money (e.g. routine checking for image manipulation, plagiarism)
• Publishers may not want to fund these
Journals may be reluctant to instigate investigations / publicize misconduct because of:

- Resources involved (lack of time)
- Fear of litigation
- Lack of confidence / guidance
- Previous bad experience (e.g. nothing happened / took a lot of time)
Future vision

• Cooperation between editors' organizations across:
  – regions
  – disciplines

• Liaison between funders, regulators and editors – uniform global standards

• Funding for research, training and promotion