

## WHAT EDITORS WANT?

Wisla Wedzicha  
Professor of Respiratory Medicine  
NHLI Imperial College  
27 June 2023

1

## Components of a journal

- Editorials – usually commissioned
- Original research papers
- Research letters
- Correspondence letters
- Reviews – various, state of art, Perspectives, clinical reviews
- Guidelines
- Workshops
- Case reports
- Erratum (corrections)

2

## KEY JOURNAL FEATURES

- Peer review
- On line submission and processing
- Supplementary material/appendices
- Online first publications
- Full use of internet – videos, images, podcasts
- Dissemination
- Publication Ethics
- Trial registration – [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)
- Data sharing statement
- Involvement of early career researchers

3

## THE BEST PAPER

- Original, topical research
- Good rationale for the study
- Important disease mechanism
- Implications for clinical management
- Clear objectives
- Sound methodology
- Good data analysis, results and figures
- Comprehensive and relevant discussion
- Generates interest

4

## CHOOSING THE BEST AND RIGHT JOURNAL

- General vs. Specialist
- Clinical vs more basic research
- Target audience
- Impact factor
- Message in paper
- Luck!

5

## OBJECTIVES OF A SPECIALIST JOURNAL?

- Publish high quality original papers
- Relevance to clinical practice
- Journal content advances the field
- Papers will be cited
- High quality educational content
- Optimal impact factor
- Increase profile of the journal

6

## PLANNING THE BEST PAPER

- Original, topical research
- Good rationale for the study
- Important disease mechanism
- Implications for clinical management

7

## WRITING THE BEST PAPER

- Clear objectives
- Sound methodology – avoid making this too brief – otherwise use on line supplements
- Good data analysis, results and figures
- Comprehensive and relevant discussion generates interest

8

## FOLLOW SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

- Adhere to requested format of papers
- (Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to journals. [www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org))
- Competing interest statements
- Cover letter may be required and useful
- Funding source needs to be acknowledged
- IRB – ethics approval
- Send copies of overlapping unpublished papers
- Specific issues for clinical trials –
- [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)

9

## STATISTICAL POINTERS

- Ensure study power (sample size) adequate and presented
- Explain inconsistencies in number of study subjects (loss to follow-up)
- State primary outcomes and avoid multiple testing
- Present sizes of effect (mean differences) with 95% confidence intervals
- Give exact P values rather than ns. and  $p > 0.05$
- Validation cohorts where appropriate

10

## IMPACT FACTOR for Journal X for 2022

Number of citations in 2022 to papers (including editorials, letters) published in Journal X in 2020 and 2021

---

Number of papers (original papers, reviews, case reports) published in Journal X in 2020 and 2021

11

## HOW TO INCREASE THE IMPACT FACTOR

- Good papers that will be cited
- Guidelines
- Editorials and letters are advantageous
- Thin journal
- No supplements
- Abstract book

12

AmericanThoracicSociety

## ATS Family of Journals



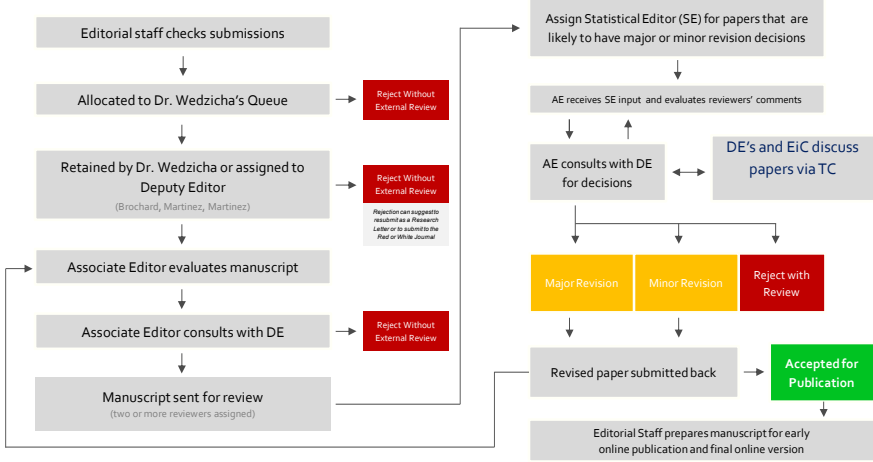

 We help the world breathe<sup>®</sup>  
 PULMONARY • CRITICAL CARE • SLEEP


13

AmericanThoracicSociety

## ATS Family of Journals

### AJRCCM Editorial Process




 We help the world breathe<sup>®</sup>  
 PULMONARY • CRITICAL CARE • SLEEP

14

## ISSUES IN PUBLICATION ETHICS

|                                     |                                    |                           |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Peer review                         | Research misconduct                | Authorship                |
| Duplicate or Redundant publication  | Fragmented or "salami" publication | Publication bias          |
| Declarations of competing interests | Plagiarism                         | How to manage retractions |

15

## PEER REVIEW

- The best way to assess a paper
- Improves a paper
- Not perfect!
- Reflects the standards of the journal
- Responsible and time-consuming job
- Confidential or open
- Competing interests
- Rewards
- Rogue reviewers!

16



## RESPONSIBILITIES OF PEER REVIEWERS

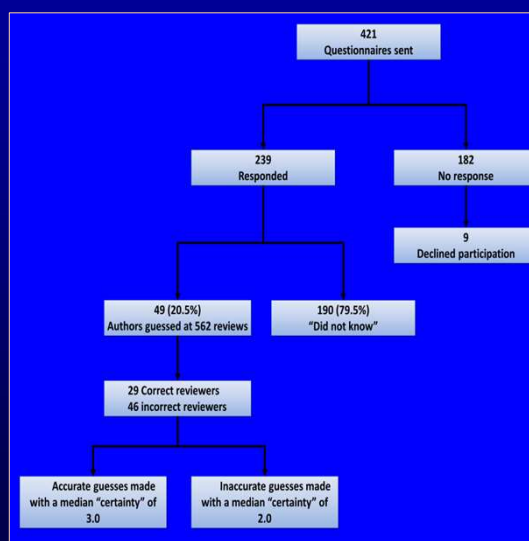
- Only agree to review if you have expertise in the subject
- Provide Fair, honest, and unbiased assessment
- Make sure you can return review in a timely manner
- Peer review is confidential and must not reveal
- Peer reviewer is an advisor

17

## PEER REVIEW REVIEWER ANONYMITY PROJECT

- 239 authors responded
- 49 respondents guessed at one or more reviewers
- 75 guesses
- 5.2% reviewers correctly identified

Ritchie et al  
AJRCCM 2018



18

## PEER REVIEW REVIEWER ANONYMITY PROJECT

### Anonymity

- 29/562 reviewers **correctly** identified (5.2%, CI [3.5, 7.3])
- 46/562 were **incorrectly** identified (8.2%, CI [6.0, 10.1])

Ritchie et al AJRCCM 2018

19

## TRIAL REGISTRATION

Mandatory and **prospective** for all clinical trials

Official registration sites such as [clinicaltrials.gov](http://clinicaltrials.gov)

Careful registration of primary outcome and other outcomes essential

**Checked at Submission**

20

## John Darsee, Department of Cardiology, Harvard 1981

- Observed falsifying data--no action taken
- A few months later it became clear that results he had obtained in a multicentre study were very different from those of the others
- An investigation showed that many of his more than 100 studies were fraudulent
- Again, many of the studies included distinguished authors

21

## MOST DRAMATIC CASE OF FRAUD IN THE UK



22

- Malcolm Pearce, a senior lecturer in at St George's Hospital Medical School in London
- A world famous expert on ultrasonography and assistant editor
- A second author on the case report was Geoffrey Chamberlain, editor of the journal, president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and professor and head of department at St George's.
- The same issue contained a randomised controlled trial also by Malcolm Pearce

23

## **PRESS COVERAGE**

- A front page story in the Daily Mail exposed the two papers as fraudulent.
- Full length picture of Geoffrey Chamberlain saying that he had not known that the work was fraudulent despite his name being on the paper.
- Chamberlain said it was common within medicine for people to have their name on papers when they had not done much.

24

## HOW THIS WAS EXPOSED

- A junior doctor at St George's Hospital Medical School had raised questions about the two papers
- An investigation was promptly started and showed:

The patient did not exist

The patients supposedly in the randomised trial could not be found

Among studies investigated to 1989 - three others fraudulent

25

**COPE** COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What are you looking for

Home About COPE Resources Cases Become a member Members Events News & Opinion Contact Us

**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...](#)

**Join here**  
What are the benefits of COPE membership?

**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 cases from Iran.

**COPE** COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

26

## RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

- Fabrication: invention of data or cases
- Falsification: willful distortion of data
- Plagiarism: copying of ideas, data, or words without attribution
- Image manipulation: inaccurate or false representations of actual images
- Failing to get consent from an ethics committee for research

27

## RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

- Publication of post hoc analyses without declaration that they were post hoc
- Gift authorship
- Not attributing other authors
- Ghost authorship
- Redundant or duplicate publication
- Not disclosing a conflict of interest

28

## ICMJE COI FORM

**ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest**

**Instructions**

The purpose of this form is to provide readers of your manuscript with information about your other interests that could influence how they receive and understand your work. The form is designed to be completed electronically and stored electronically. It contains programming that allows appropriate data display. Each author should submit a separate form and is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of the submitted information. The form is in six parts.

- 1. Identifying information.**
- 2. The work under consideration for publication.**
- 3. Relevant financial activities outside the submitted work.**

**1. Identifying information.**  
This section asks for information about the work that you have submitted for publication. The time frame for this reporting is that of the work itself, from the initial conception and planning to the present. The requested information is about resources that you received, either directly or indirectly, from your institution, to enable you to complete the work. Checking "No" means that you did the work without receiving any financial support from any third party - that is, the work was supported by funds from the same institution that pay your salary and that institution did not receive third-party funds with which to pay you. If you or your institution received funds from a third party to support the work, such as a government granting agency, charitable foundation or commercial sponsor, check "Yes".

**2. The work under consideration for publication.**  
This section asks about your financial relationships with entities in the bio-medical areas that could be perceived to influence, or that give the appearance of potentially influencing, what you write in the submitted work. You should disclose interactions with ANY entity that could be considered directly relevant to the work. For example, if your article is about testing an epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) antagonist in lung cancer, you should report all associations with entities pursuing diagnostic or therapeutic strategies in cancer treatment, not just in the area of EGFR in lung cancer.

**3. Relevant financial activities outside the submitted work.**  
This section asks about your financial relationships with entities in the bio-medical areas that could be perceived to influence, or that give the appearance of potentially influencing, what you write in the submitted work. You should disclose interactions with ANY entity that could be considered directly relevant to the work. For example, if your article is about testing an epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) antagonist in lung cancer, you should report all associations with entities pursuing diagnostic or therapeutic strategies in cancer treatment, not just in the area of EGFR in lung cancer.

Report all sources of revenue paid for, or intended to be paid, directly to you or your institution on your behalf over the 36 months prior to submission of the work. This should include all monies from sources with relevance to the submitted work, not just monies from the entity that sponsored the research. Please note that your interactions with the entity sponsoring that work outside the submitted work should also be disclosed. If there is any question, it is usually better to disclose a relationship than not to do so.

For grants you have received for work outside the submitted work, you should disclose support ONLY from entities that could be perceived to be affected financially by the published work, such as drug companies, or foundations supported by entities that could be perceived to have financial stakes in the outcome. Public funding sources, such as government agencies, charitable foundations or academic institutions, need not be disclosed. For example, if a government agency sponsored a study in which you have been involved and it was sponsored by a pharmaceutical company, you need only list the pharmaceutical company.

**ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest**

**Section 1: Identifying Information**

1. Given Name (First Name) 2. Surname (Last Name) 3. Date

4. Are you the corresponding author?  Yes  No

5. Manuscript Title

6. Manuscript Identifying Number (if you know it)

**Section 2: The Work Under Consideration for Publication**

Did you or your institution or any other receiving payment or services from a third party (government, commercial, private foundation, etc.) for any aspect of the submitted work (including but not limited to grants, data monitoring board, study design, manuscript preparation, statistical analysis, etc.)?

Are there any relevant conflicts of interest?  Yes  No

**Section 3: Relevant financial activities outside the submitted work.**

Place a check in the appropriate boxes in the table to indicate whether you have financial relationships (independent of amount of compensation) with entities as described in the instructions. Use one line for each entity; add as many lines as you need by clicking the "Add" or "Yes." You should report relationships that were present during the 36 months prior to publication.

Are there any relevant conflicts of interest?  Yes  No

29

## DUPLICATE PUBLICATION

- Publication of a paper that overlaps substantially with one already published in another or the same journal
- Exceptions are:
  - Abstracts, press reports
  - Web publishing is not exempt
  - Letters to editor are not exempt

30

## DUPLICATE PUBLICATION

- Distorts scientific literature
- Overemphasises importance of work
- Distorts systematic reviews
- Lack of originality in paper
- Affects reputation of the journal
- Wastes time

31

## WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT OVERLAP?

- Always let editors know of similar manuscripts in the cover letter at submission
- Reference the overlapping papers at submission
- Decision as to degree of overlap made during the review and editorial process
- **ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY IS WITH AUTHOR**

32



## IMAGE MANIPULATION

- Image manipulation check via software for accepted manuscripts is now a standard procedure
- Artefacts also picked up and each case has to be evaluated
- Retractions have occurred due to image manipulation

33

## PLAGIARISM

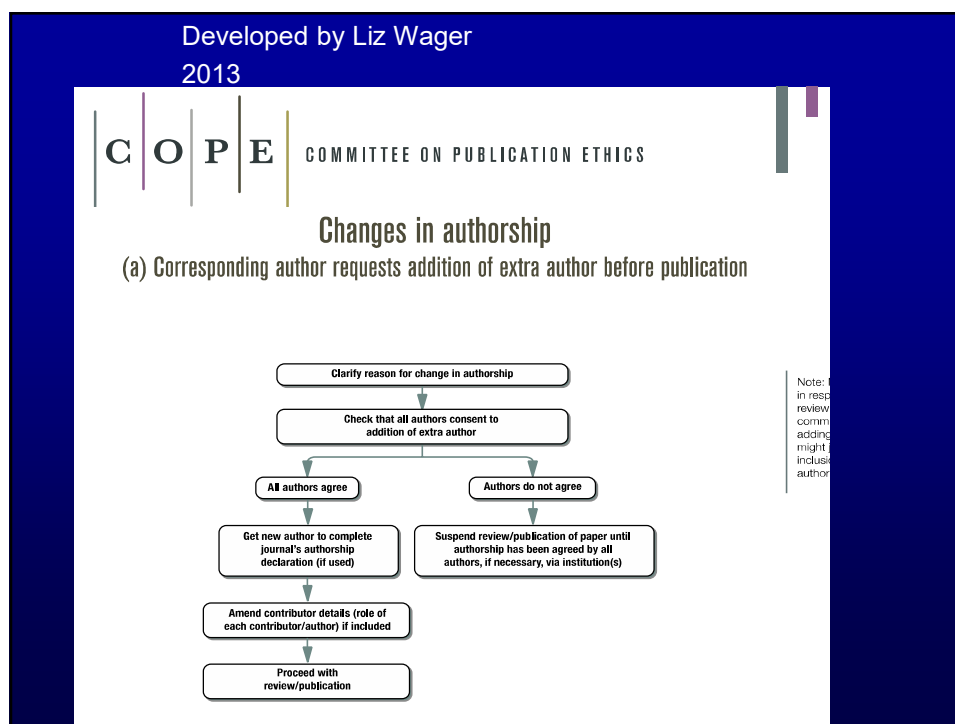
- RESEARCH DATA PLAGIARISM
- TEXT PLAGIARISM
- CHECKS IN PLACE FOR PLAGIARISM – RECENT EXAMPLE

34

## PROBLEMS WITH AUTHORSHIP

- Ghost authorship – should acknowledge anyone that has contributed to the paper
- Gift authorship
- Failure to include authors
- Authorship by industry- sponsored studies
- Statements of author's contribution – guarantor and contributor

35



36

## DEALING WITH MISCONDUCT

- Editor investigates allegations
- Contact authors and ask for a response
- Contact authors Institution's Research Integrity Office
- Contact other journals involved
- Publish notice in journal - may be just a explanatory letter on misunderstanding

### FURTHER ACTIONS IF NECESSARY

- Alert employers or professional body
- Sanctions
- Complex cases refer to Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) for advice
- Take legal advice! [www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org)

37

## PREVENTING RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

- Improved awareness
- Understand overlap
- Better conduct and reporting of studies and trials, using a guideline such as:  
<http://www.equator-network.org/>
- “Enlightened” sponsors (a code of good practice Wager et al 2003 <http://www.gpp-guidelines.org>)
- Better editorial policies
- Vigilant editors and reviewers
- Responsible authors

38

## REBUTTALS, APPEALS, COMPLAINTS

- Avoid impulsive emails
- Take care when sending emails and “Reply to all” button
- Seek additional expert’s opinions
- However, reviewers are only advisory
- Issues of originality, similar papers, journal publication priority
- Rebuttals can waste authors’ and editors’ time

39

## CORRECTIONS, EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN, RETRACTIONS

- Corrections: common and genuine mistakes
- Corrections not appropriate if scientific misconduct occurs
- What to do with major corrections? (Lancet)
- May post expression of concern if investigation needed for misconduct
- Retractions

40

## Why and how do journals retract articles? An analysis of Medline retractions 1988–2008

Elizabeth Wager,<sup>1</sup> Peter Williams<sup>2</sup>

J Med Ethics 2011

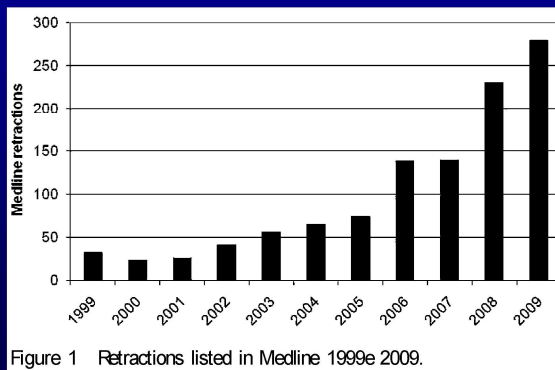
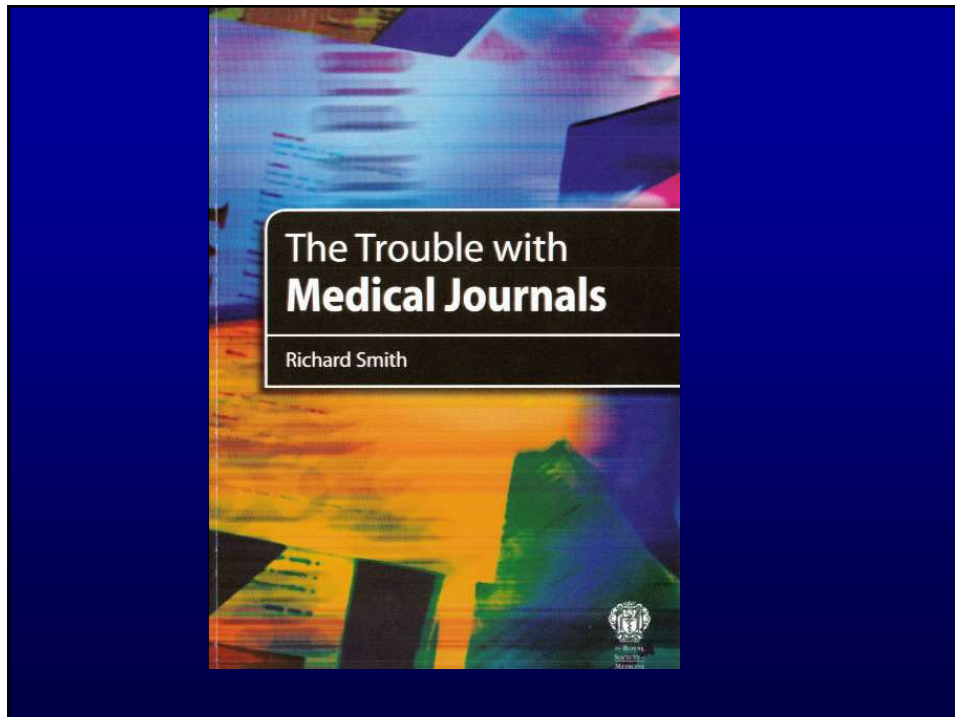


Figure 1 Retractions listed in Medline 1999e 2009.

Honest error/nonreplicable findings. 40%  
 Research misconduct 28%  
 Redundant publication 17%  
 Other reasons: 15%

63% retracted by authors  
 37% by editors/journal/publishers/others

41



42