



## How do scientific journals deal with scientific fraud? The role of COPE

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Reproduction

# Why we should be concerned

- Influences research and clinical practice (e.g. vaccine scare following Wakefield *et al.* 1998 *Lancet* paper implying link between MMR vaccine and autism; pain treatment of millions of patients based on fraudulent work by anaesthesiologist Scott Reuben)
- Patients put at risk by flawed research
  - Steen (2011, *J Med. Ethics*) – 9,189 patients treated in 180 retracted primary studies (110 due to error, 70 due to fraud) published 2000-10
  - 70,501 patients treated in 851 secondary studies citing a retracted paper
- Retracted work goes on being cited
- Waste of resources, human and financial
- Damages public trust in research/science



### **Jan Hendrik Schön**

Germany

Physics

Falsified and fabricated data in numerous publications

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

Investigation report Sept 2002

Doctorate revoked, Schön appealed



### **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



### **Jon Sudbø**

Norway

Oral cancer

Data fabrication – 900 fictitious subjects - and manipulation

Published in *The Lancet* Oct 2005

Commission report June 2006

Licence to practice & doctorate revoked

# Concerns

Is the incidence of research and publication misconduct increasing?

Are we seeing just the tip of the iceberg?

Does the cumulative effect of 'minor' misbehaviours and ethical transgressions present a greater threat than high-profile serious misconduct cases?



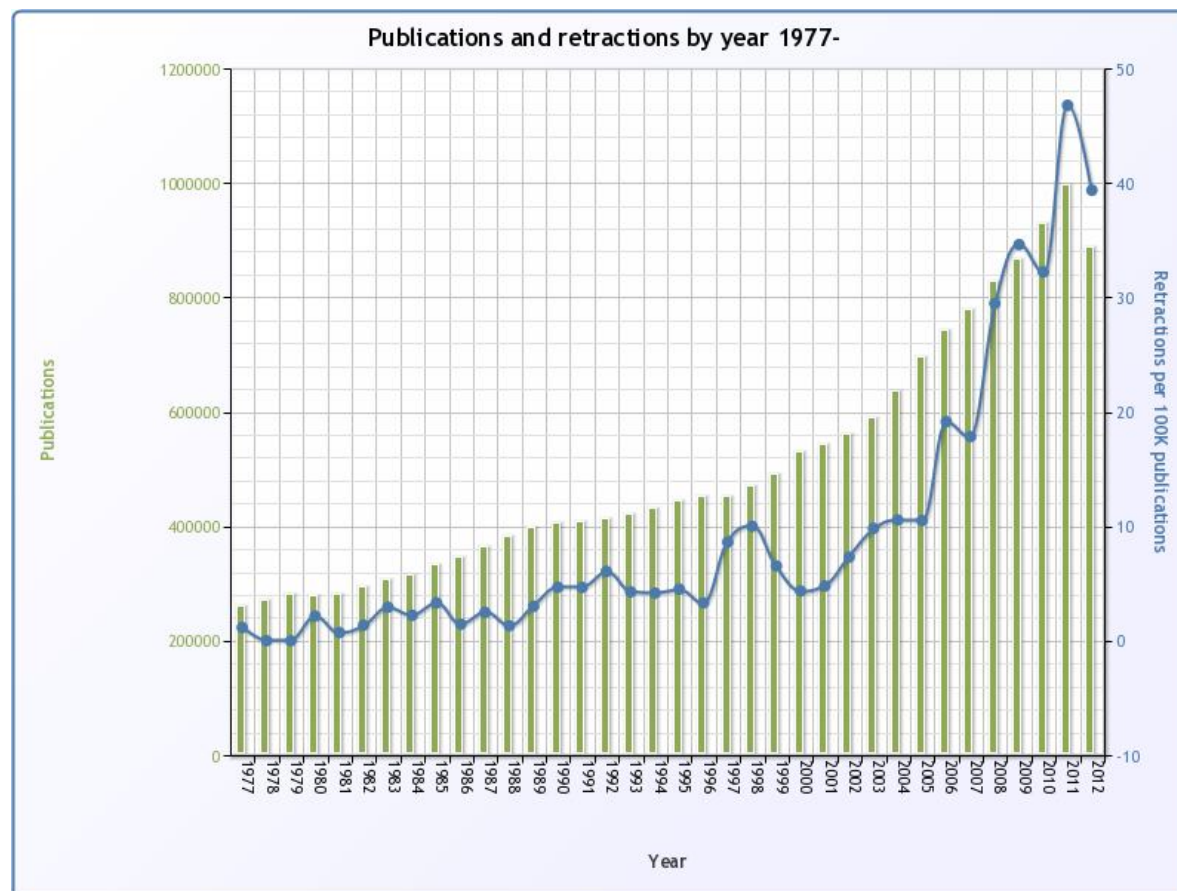
# Publications & retractions 1977- 2012

<http://pmretract.herokuapp.com/>



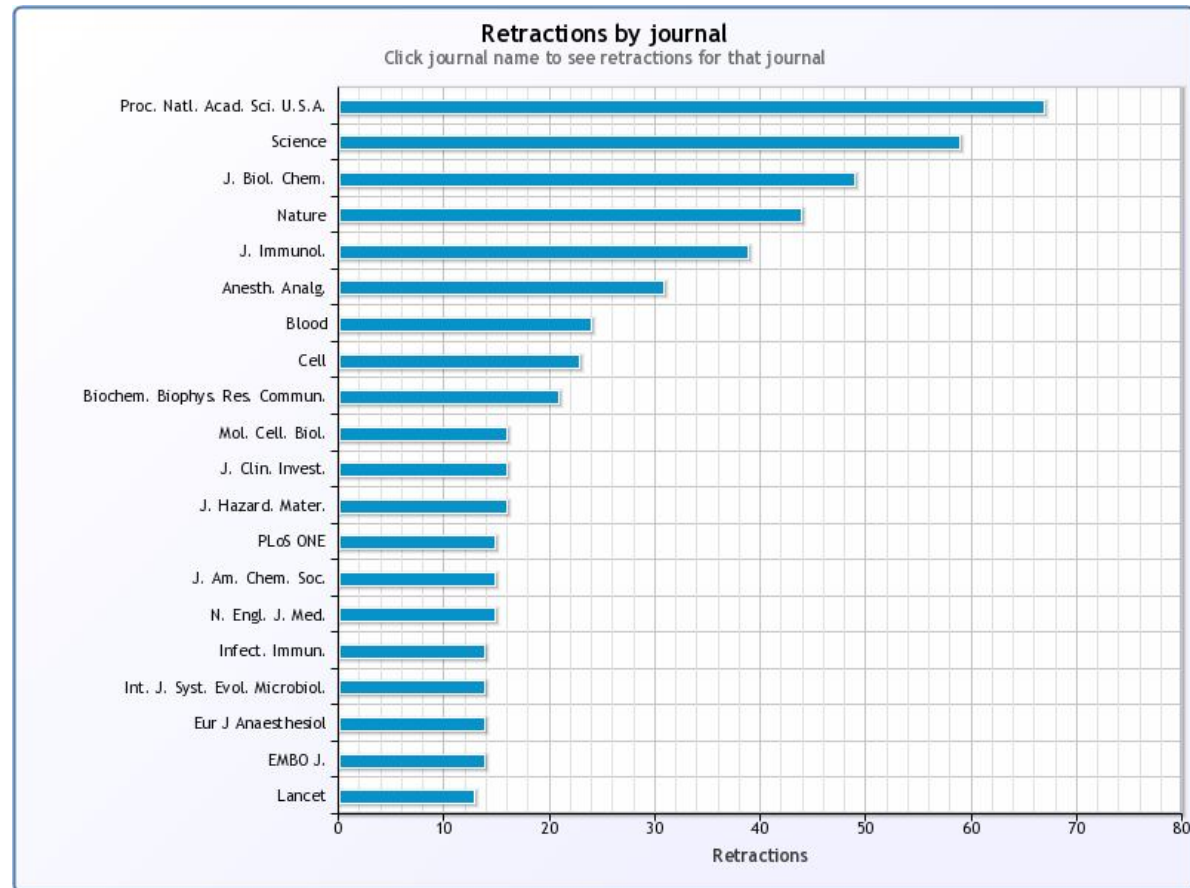
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# Publications & retractions

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# Reasons for more misconduct and unethical behaviour?

- Lack of knowledge about research and publication ethics
- Larger, multi-disciplinary and more global collaborations
- Increasing pressure on researchers to publish
- Financial inducements compromising integrity





“Promoting integrity in research publication”

# Today ...

- COPE currently has more than 7000 members and is international in its reach and membership
- All academic disciplines are covered
- 18 Council members from 7 countries and a range of disciplines (biomedicine, feminist media studies, geophysics, life sciences, literary studies, maths, psychiatric nursing)

Promoting integrity in re... x

www.publicationethics.org

Smoked trout with ... Buttermilk Pancakes... BBC - Radio 1's Big ... PPI / DPI / Pixels / R... PDF to Book Specifi... Welcome to Pennyb... Andy Warhol Pop Ar... BELLA DORMA BED ...

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COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

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# 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...](#)




### Flowcharts

Our flowcharts are designed to help editors follow COPE's Code of Conduct and implement its advice when faced with cases of suspected misconduct.

### 1,2,3,4,5 Guidelines

Access COPE's official guidance, including the Retraction Guidelines.



### COPE Research Grant

COPE offers a grant of up to £5000 to a COPE member for a research project into publication ethics. The next deadline for applications is 1st June 2011.



### Code of Conduct

COPE aims to define best practice in the ethics of scholarly publishing and to assist editors, editorial board members, owners of journals and publishers to achieve this.

**NEWS & OPINION**

#### News / COPE Forum agenda for 6 June 2011 meeting

31/5/2011 3.09pm

#### News / Spanish version of flowcharts now available

25/5/2011 4.58pm

#### News / COPE Research Grant - deadline looming

23/5/2011 3.41pm

EN ?

18:19 31/05/2011

# 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
- 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>

06\_Ethics\_Submitted.pdf (application/pdf Object) - Mozilla Firefox

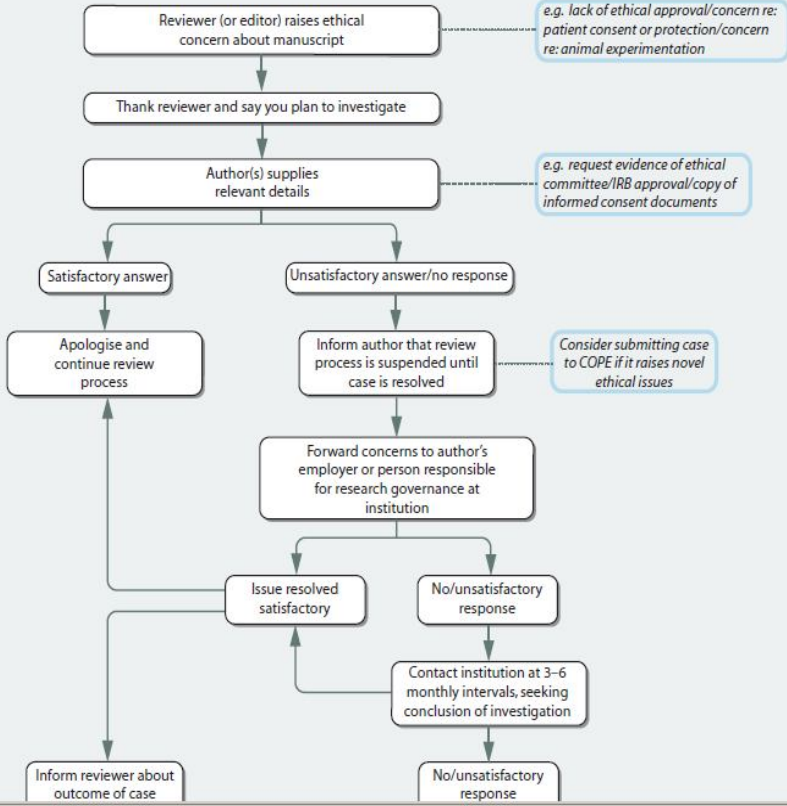
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WWW.PUBLICATIONETHICS.ORG

### What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript



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graph TD
    A[Reviewer (or editor) raises ethical concern about manuscript] --> B[Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate]
    B --> C[Author(s) supplies relevant details]
    C --> D[Satisfactory answer]
    C --> E[Unsatisfactory answer/no response]
    D --> F[Apologise and continue review process]
    E --> G[Inform author that review process is suspended until case is resolved]
    G --> H[Forward concerns to author's employer or person responsible for research governance at institution]
    H --> I[Issue resolved satisfactory]
    H --> J[No/unsatisfactory response]
    I --> F
    J --> K[Contact institution at 3-6 monthly intervals, seeking conclusion of investigation]
    K --> I
    K --> L[No/unsatisfactory response]
    F --> M[Inform reviewer about outcome of case]
    L --> M
  
```

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

*e.g. request evidence of ethical committee/IRB approval/copy of informed consent documents*

*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)

# COPE: other services

- Ethics Audit (members only)
- Annual seminars (European, North American, and – new for 2011 - Asia-Pacific) – free for members
- Research Grants (members only)
- eLearning course (members only) - launching September 2011, with 4 of the planned 11 modules: An Introduction to Publication Ethics, Plagiarism, Fabrication, and Falsification
- Quarterly Newsletter '*Ethical Editing*' 



# COPE contact details

Thank you!

**Comments/queries for COPE:**

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**Website:**

<http://www.publicationethics.org/>

Please contact me with any queries you may have: [andre@vansconsulting.be](mailto:andre@vansconsulting.be)