ESF Members' Forum on Research Integrity

Final Meeting, Rome, 10-11 November 2010

Report on Discussions and Conclusion of the Singapore (Second World) Conference on Research Integrity, relating to issues of Editorship and Authorship

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Acknowledgements

- I did not participate strongly in this stream of the Conference's work

- I am indebted to Sabine Kleinert and Elizabeth Wager of COPE (the Committee on Publications Ethics) who chaired the sessions on this issue, and whose report provides the basis for my notes to the Members' Forum

- It is hoped that two statements from the Conference – on authorship and editorship respectively - will be published in early 2011, and endorsed by research institutions, funders, professional societies, and publishers

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Contributions

These came from

- Researchers, reviewers and editors

- Medicine, biology, forestry, earth sciences, mathematics, philosophy, humanities and political science.

- Africa, Asia, Australasia, Europe, Middle East, and North America

- Altogether some 20 major contributors

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Key Issues for Authors

- The research being reported should have been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner and should comply with all relevant legislation.

- Researchers should present their results clearly, honestly, and without fabrication, falsification or inappropriate data manipulation.

- Researchers should strive to describe their methods clearly and unambiguously so that their findings can be confirmed by others.

Key Issues for Authors (2)

- Researchers should adhere to publication requirements that submitted work is original, is not plagiarised, and has not been published elsewhere.

- Authors should take collective responsibility for submitted and published work.

- The authorship of research publications should accurately reflect individuals' contributions to the work and its reporting.

- Funding sources and relevant conflicts of interest should be disclosed

Accuracy, Completeness and Balance

- Publications should be clear, accurate, complete and balanced, and should avoid misleading, selective or ambiguous reporting

- Research images should not be modified in any misleading way

- Researchers should use appropriate methods of data analysis and display

- New findings should be presented in the context of previous research

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Originality, Non-Duplication and Acknowledgement

- Authors should adhere to the requirement that submitted work is original and has not been published elsewhere in any language

- Articles should not be submitted concurrently to more than one publication without editors' agreement

- Data, text, figures and ideas originated by others should be properly acknowledged

Funding and Authorship

- All sources of funding, direct or indirect, should be declared

- Specialist support such as statistical or writing assistance should be disclosed

- Any role of funders in research design, analysis, execution or interpretation should be disclosed

- Guest, Gift and Ghost authorship should be prevented

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Key Issues for Editors

- Editors are accountable and have to take responsibility for everything they publish

- They should make fair and unbiased decisions independent from commercial consideration and ensure fair and appropriate peer review process

- Policies should encourage maximum transparency and complete and honest reporting

Key Issues for Editors (2)

- Editors should guard integrity and issue corrections when needed about suspect or improper conduct

- They should assess critically the ethical conduct of studies involving humans or animals

- Peer reviewers and authors should be clear about what is expected of them

- Policies about editorial conflict of interest should be in place, and peer review and editorial misconduct should not be acceptable

Independence and Quality

- Procedures should ensure the quality of material and the integrity of the published record

- Should not attempt inappropriate influence by artificially increasing journal metrics

- Must protect confidentiality of authors' material

- Ensure declaration of any relevant financial <u>and non-financial</u> interests

- All published papers should make a substantial new contribution to their field

Plagiarism, Errors and Manipulation

- Editors should screen for plagiarism, and use anti-plagiarism software

- Should also use software to detect image manipulation

- Should facilitate readers' responses

- Errata for genuine errors, even where they do not render the work invalid, should be published as soon as possible

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Dealing with Serious Concerns

- When serious issues raised, authors should first be given the opportunity to respond

- If response unsatisfactory editors should then take it to their institutions

- In bio-medical field where concerns are very serious, and might affect clinical practice or public health, readers may need to be informed even when an investigation is ongoing

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Ethical Issues

- Should ensure approval of study by ethics review committees

- A statement on the consent procedure should be included in the paper

- If there is any doubt about the consent procedure editors should ask to see the consent form

- Authors should have obtained explicit consent for publication

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Peer Review and Conflicts of Interest

- Peer reviewers should have sufficient expertise and no conflict of interest

- Peer reviewers should assess ethical issues and redundant publication

- Reviewers must guarantee not to breach confidentiality of material

- Peer reviewer comments should be passed on, normally in their entirety

- Peer review misconduct should be pursued

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