



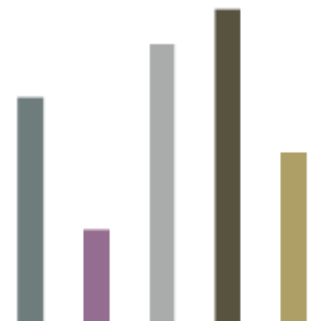
# COPE and Publication Ethics

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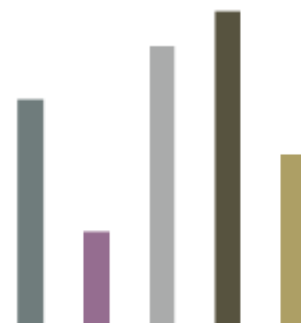
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# Overview

- What is publication ethics?
- What is COPE?
- What are the big issues?
- What help can you get?
- What are the challenges?
- What are the solutions?



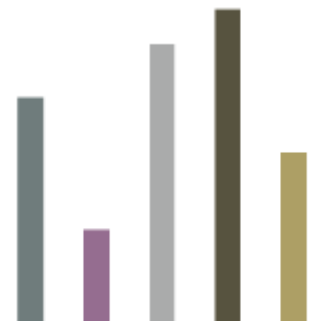
# What is publication ethics?



A set of common rules among authors, editors, reviewers and publishers to protect the integrity of the scientific record.



*Charlotte Haug, previous Vice Chair, COPE*



# What is COPE?



COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Edit my details Sign out

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?



# Who are COPE members?

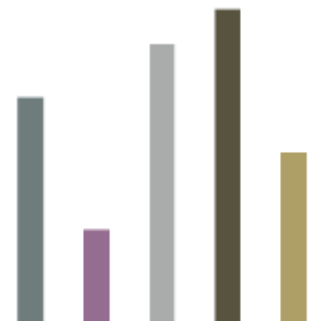
## General members

- 10,000+ members (editors, publishers, associates)
- International and fully inclusive (100+ countries)
- Broad range of subject areas

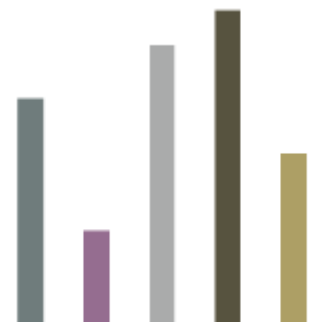


## Constitutional members

- 40 council members elected by general members or co-opted
- Trustee Board: officers/committee chairs, elected by Council members
- All volunteers, supported by 5 paid staff



COPE provides



# COPE resources and services



## Code of Conduct

Through the 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.

[View Code](#)



## Flowcharts

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

[View Flowcharts](#)



## Guidelines

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

[View Guidelines](#)



## eLearning

COPE's eLearning course is designed to give editors a deeper understanding about publication ethics and practical guidance about how to detect, prevent and handle misconduct.

[View eLearning](#)



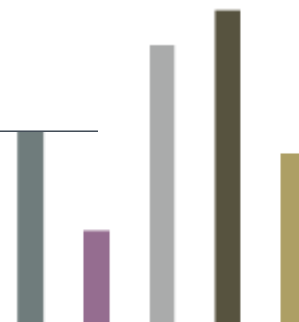
## International standards for editors and authors

Position statements setting out international standards for responsible research publication for editors and authors.



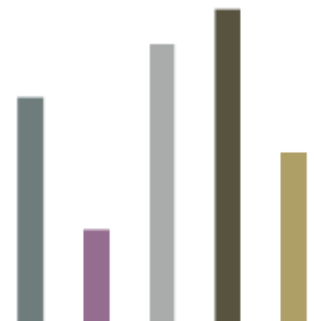
## Discussion Documents

Discussion documents aim to stimulate discussion and debate within the academic publishing community. Comments on the documents will be



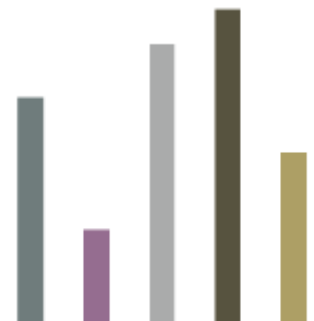
# COPE expectations

- COPE expects members to adhere to code of conduct
- COPE will consider complaints against members
- Facilitate dialogue
- Advise on best practice
- Not specifics

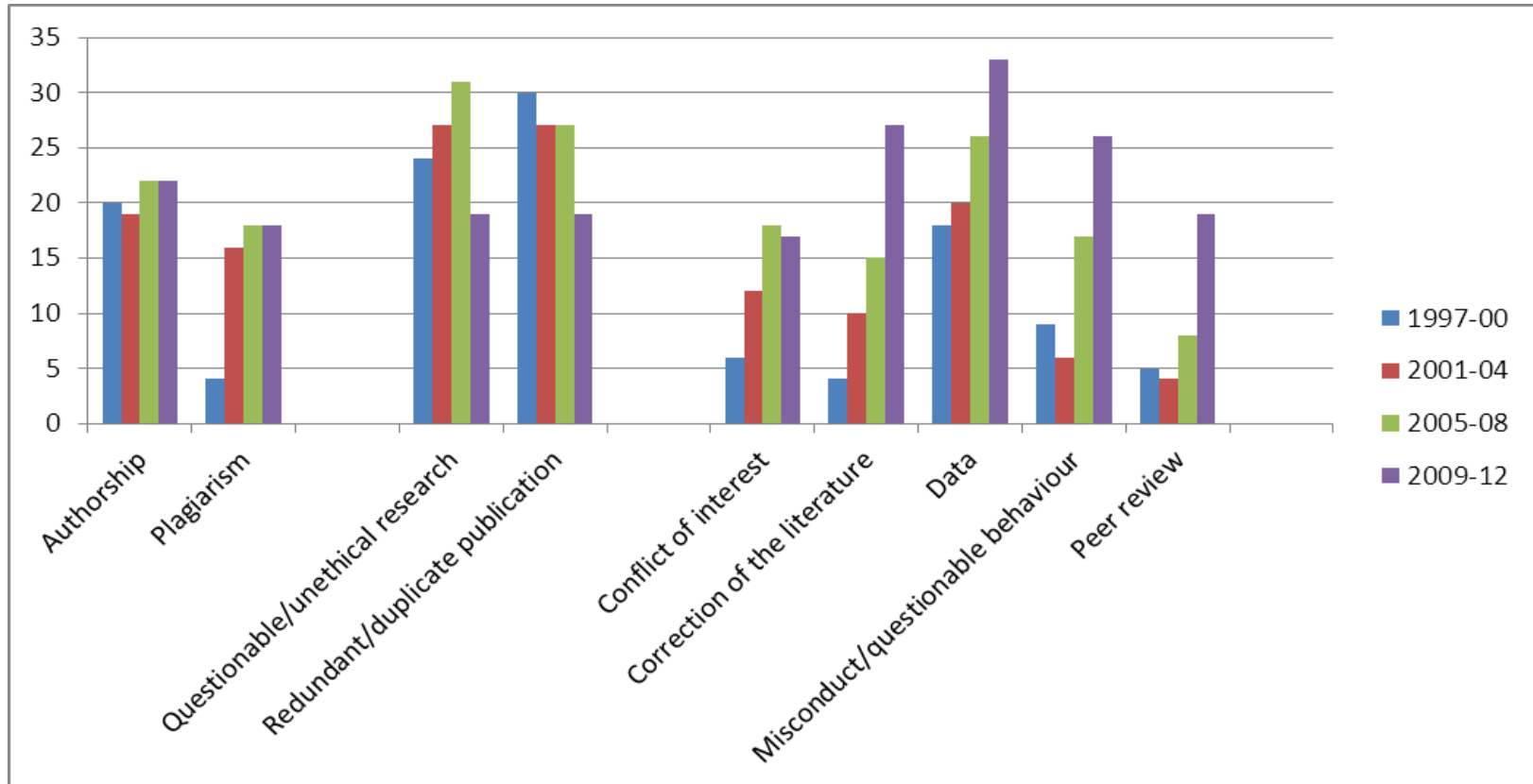




**What are the big issues?**



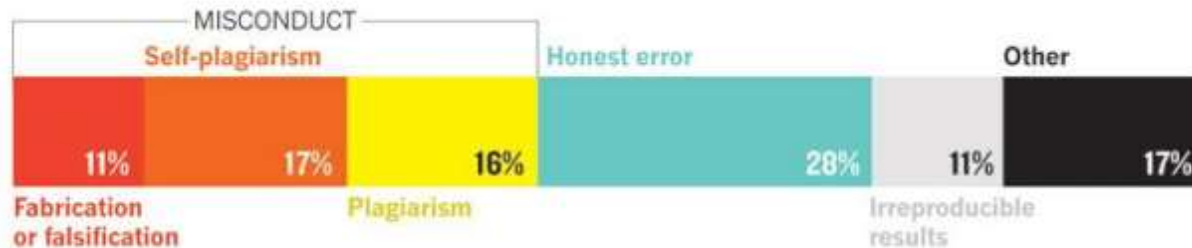
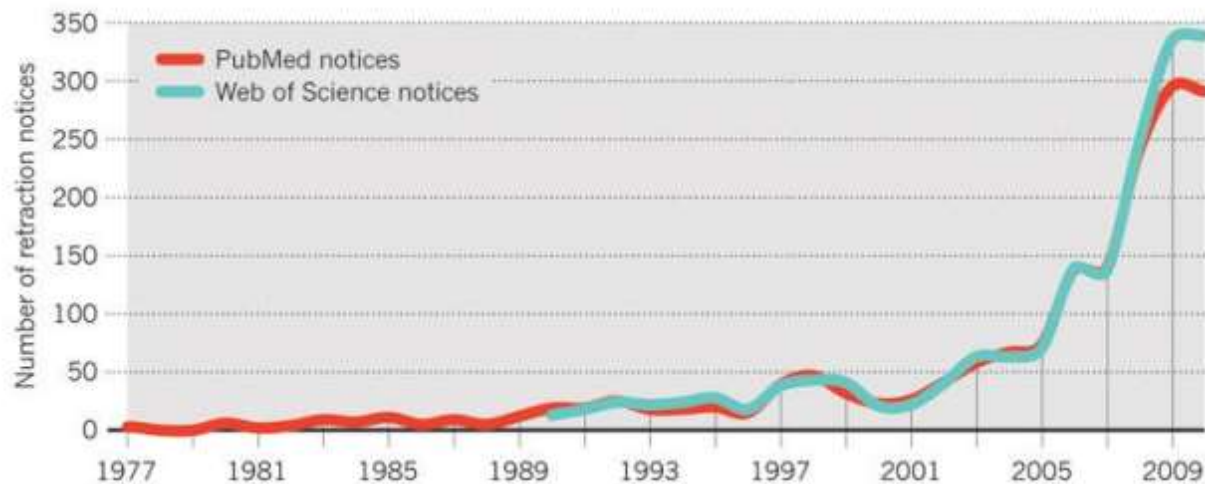
# Prevalence of problems



# For Editors – handling unethical practices

## RISE OF THE RETRACTIONS

In the past decade, the number of retraction notices has shot up 10-fold (**top**), even as the literature has expanded by only 44%. It is likely that only about half of all retractions are for researcher misconduct (**middle**). Higher-impact journals have logged more retraction notices over the past decade, but much of the increase during 2006–10 came from lower-impact journals (**bottom**).





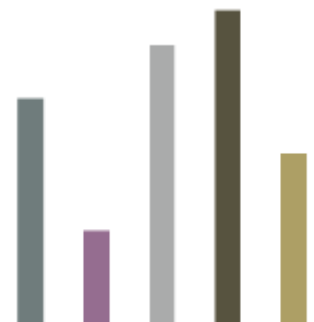
# Peer review problems

Relatively recently discovered (2011)

Peer review scams and cartels (2014)

Fake email addresses and electronic submissions facilitated this activity

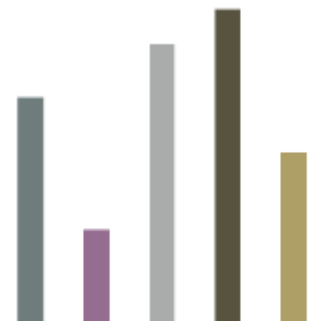
Resulted in mass retractions by publishers (2015)



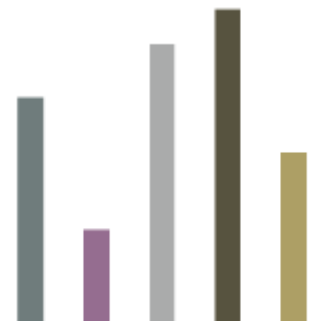
# How are issues detected?

## Misconduct/errors can be detected

- By editor
- By software
- By reviewers
- By authors
- During peer review
- AND post-publication (readers)



# What help can you get?





## Code of Conduct

Through the 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.

[View Code](#)

## Flowcharts

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

[View Flowcharts](#)

## Sample Letters

Sample letters for editors covering a range of scenarios e.g. suspected plagiarism, change of authorship, undisclosed COIs

[View more](#)

## Guidelines

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

[View Guidelines](#)

## eLearning

COPE's eLearning course is designed to give editors a deeper understanding about publication ethics and practical guidance about how to detect, prevent and handle misconduct.

[View eLearning](#)

## Audit

Tool to help editors think about ethical issues and decide what is best for their journals

[View more](#)

## International standards for editors and authors

Position statements setting out international standards for responsible research publication for editors and authors.

[View more](#)

## Discussion Documents

Discussion documents aim to stimulate discussion and debate within the academic publishing community. Comments on the documents will be used to inform future guidelines and policies.

[View Documents](#)

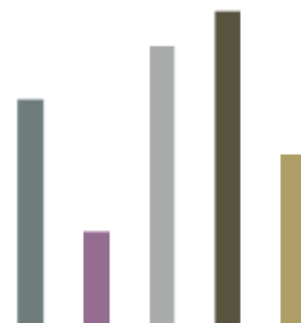
## COPE Digest

COPE's monthly newsletter, providing up to date news on COPE and publication ethics issues elsewhere.

[View Digest](#)

## Seminars

Programmes and presentations from previous seminars.

[View seminars](#)



# COPE Guidelines

## COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

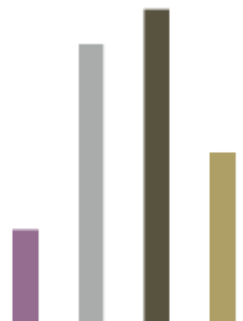
Irene Hames on behalf of COPE Council  
March 2013, v.1

Peer review in all its form plays an important role in ensuring the integrity of the scholarly record. The process depends to a large extent on trust, and requires that everyone involved behaves responsibly and ethically. Peer reviewers play a central and critical part in the peer-review process, but too often come to the role without any guidance and may be unaware of their ethical obligations. The COPE Ethical Guidelines for Peer Reviewers set out the basic principles and standards to which all peer reviewers should adhere during the peer-review process. It is hoped they will provide helpful guidance to researchers, be a reference for journals and editors in guiding their reviewers, and act as an educational resource for institutions in training their students and researchers.

### Basic principles to which peer reviewers should adhere

Peer reviewers should:

- only agree to review manuscripts for which they have the subject expertise required to carry out a proper assessment and which they can assess in a timely manner
- respect the confidentiality of peer review and not reveal any details of a manuscript or its review, during or after the peer-review process, beyond those that are released by the journal
- not use information obtained during the peer-review process for their own or any other



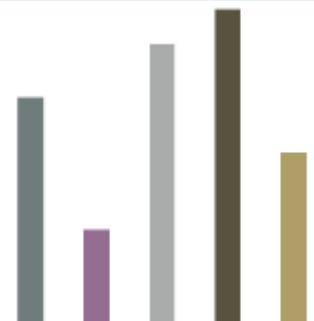
# COPE Guidelines

## RETRACTION GUIDELINES

### Summary

Journal editors should consider retracting a publication if:

- they have clear evidence that the findings are unreliable, either as a result of misconduct (e.g. data fabrication) or honest error (e.g. miscalculation or experimental error)
- the findings have previously been published elsewhere without proper crossreferencing, permission or justification (i.e. cases of redundant publication)
- it constitutes plagiarism
- it reports unethical research

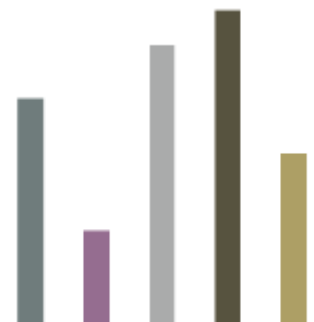


# COPE discussion documents

Discussion document on Best Practice for Consent for Publishing Medical Case Reports

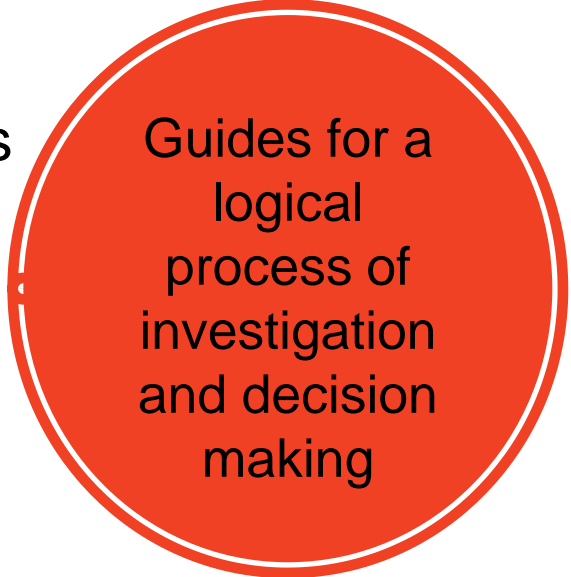
What constitutes authorship? COPE Discussion Document

Discussion/guidance document on handling competing interests

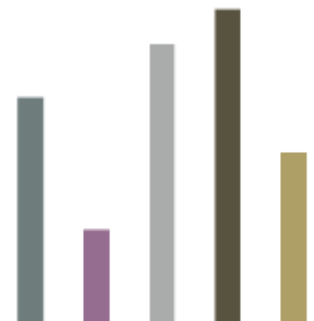


# COPE's 18 Flowcharts (in 6 languages)

- How to respond to whistle blowers
- What to do if you suspect a reviewer has appropriated an author's idea or data
- What to do if you suspect plagiarism
- What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication
- Changes in Authorship
- Conflict of Interest
- What to do if you suspect an ethical problem
- What to do if you suspect fabricated data

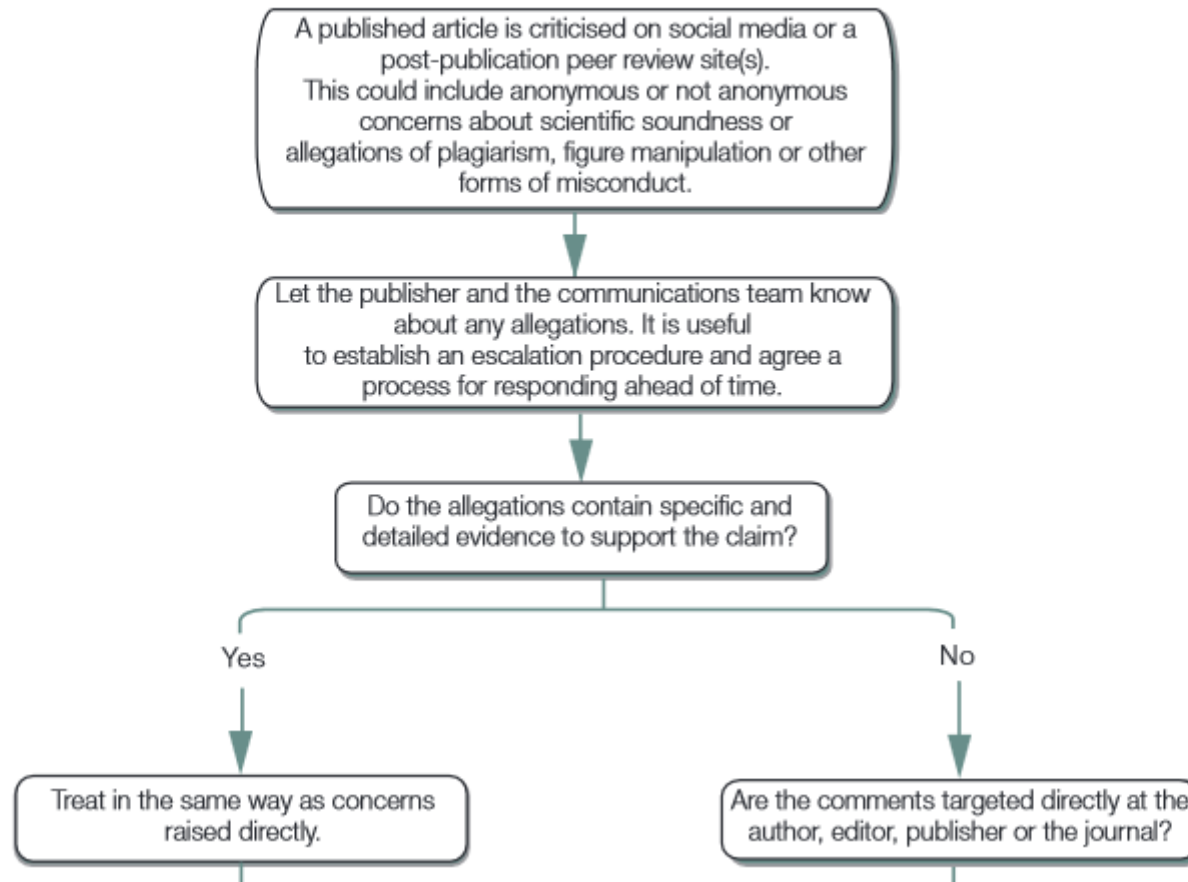


Guides for a  
logical  
process of  
investigation  
and decision  
making



# Example flowchart

## How to respond to whistle blowers when concerns are raised via social media



Note: The tone of the allegations may be aggressive or personal. Respond politely; don't get drawn into personal exchanges.

Note: Sometimes the whistle blower may prefer to remain anonymous. It is important not to try to "out" people who wish to be anonymous.

Note: It is important to take the discussion

# COPE forum

**Submit a case**

Case name (optional)

Any year

**Search**

**Search by classification**

Questionable/unethical research (171)

Redundant/duplicate publication (116)

Data (108)

Misconduct/questionable behaviour (107)

Authorship (103)

Correction of the literature (89)

Conflict of interest (64)

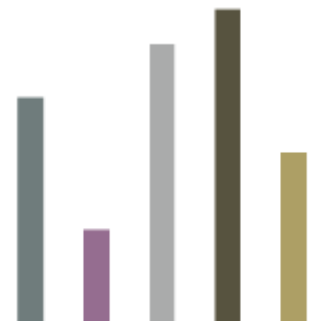
Plagiarism (59)

Peer review (56)

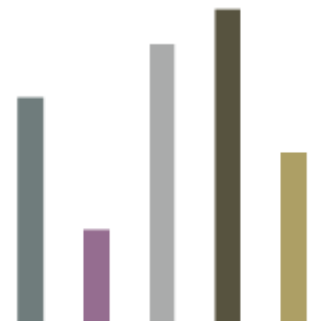
Miscellaneous (54)



- Anonymous description of real cases
- Discussion
- Advice, follow up, resolution
- Searchable resource



**There are still challenges**



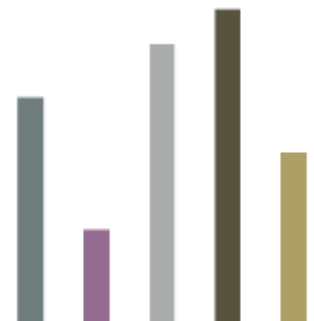
# Nuffield Council report



“58% of survey respondents are aware of scientists feel tempted or under pressure to compromise on research integrity and standards”

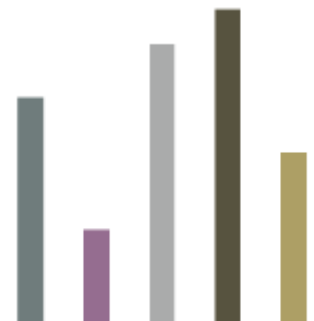
- Pressure to publish
- Reliance on metrics
- Perverse incentives
- Compromise on standards
- Verification

The Culture of Scientific Research in the UK. <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/project/research-culture/>

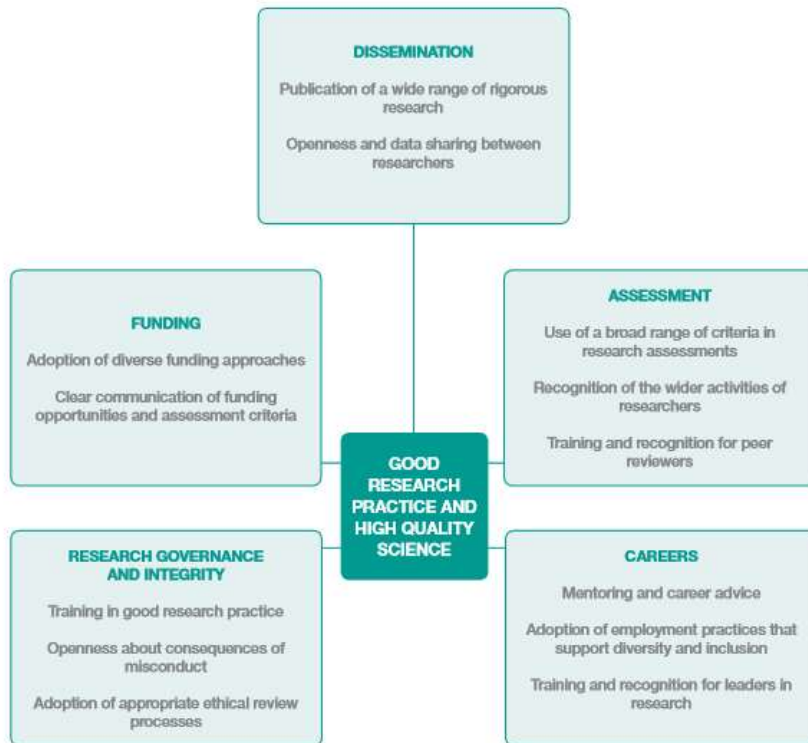




**There are no easy solutions**

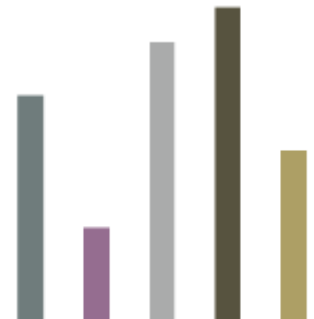


# Suggestions for actions



Role for:

- Technology
- Training
- Transparency
- Unbiased reporting
- Guidelines e.g. EQUATOR
- Reproducibility
- Data sharing
- ORCID
- Emphasis on correction



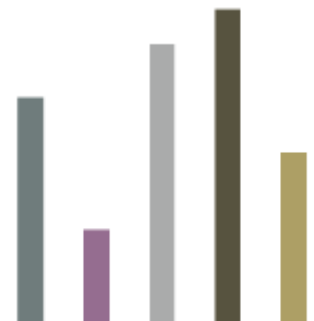
# Publication ethics – a wicked problem?

Accepting the complexity may at least help to understand what it is that needs to be solved.

Could we change the incentive structure to reward authors for more than merely being published in a journal?



Ginny Barbour, Chair COPE



## Acknowledgements

- This presentation is based on previous COPE presentations by council members
- Linda Gough and Natalie Ridgeway, COPE
- ISAJE

