

Fraudulent submissions

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Publication of articles in scientific journals fulfils a major role in the dissemination of knowledge. Editors, therefore, must be ever vigilant to ensure that the standard of their publication is maintained at the highest level. Authors who succeed in having their work published benefit from the kudos of their research both locally, by increasing their prospects of promotion, and internationally, by gaining recognition of their expertise worldwide. It follows that attempts to publish work that has been copied, published elsewhere, or worse, invented or stolen provoke stringent sanctions. When an article has to be retracted, notifications of the facts are published both on line and in the printed version of the journal. Furthermore, other journal editors are warned to be on the lookout for submissions from those authors and to block them. An organisation now exists specifically to look into and advise on these matters—The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)—to which most publishers subscribe.

All authors are required to sign a statement confirming that the work submitted is original and that it has not been published or submitted elsewhere, and that any co-workers are aware and approve of the submission along with authorisation of the institution. Copyright is transferred to the publisher. It is difficult to imagine that anyone having

signed such a statement would not be aware of the rights and wrongs of ignoring these principles.

In this journal it has been necessary to publish a retraction of an article [2] because the authors had previously published their work in another journal [1]. The titles of the two publications were different but the work was the same. Although it should be obvious, it must be made clear that submitting the same work twice cannot be tolerated. Changing the title makes matters worse since it suggests deliberate deception. A research project may generate more than one paper if and when additional new information is to be imparted but not when the same facts are simply rearranged. To do so is fraud.

The pressure on young researchers to further their careers by academic achievement has never been greater. It is hoped that the knowledge that publishers, aware of attempts to evade the rules, are increasing their vigilance to detect and refuse dishonest submissions. Editors are prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that scientific publications remain accurate, honest and truthful.

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