

ethical editing

Theme: 15 Years of COPE!

Tables and Chairs

This past week, at a meeting of a networking organization I founded in 2009, I sat with 12 women at a dining room table loaded with baked goods and discussed whether we should expand our group to include men. Some women felt that inviting men to join would increase our credibility and extend our circle of contacts—and thus potential clients. Other women liked the camaraderie of an all-woman group, and felt that allowing men to join would change the group dynamics. As we drank our tea we discussed the pros and cons of expansion and changing our focus. “Maybe we should think about establishing a board and becoming a formal organization,” one woman suggested. And immediately, I thought of COPE.

Fifteen years ago, in 1997, an informal group of mostly male medical editors sat at a table together drinking tea (it was the middle of the day, after all) and discussing common ethical problems. They could hardly have guessed that 15 years later, the group they founded—the Committee on Publication Ethics—would comprise an 18-member Council, four disciplines and countries around the world.

How did COPE start, how did it develop, and where is it headed? This issue of *Ethical Editing* takes a look at COPE’s past, present, and future, from the perspectives of the people who were and are involved.

- On page 4, *From the Field* describes a few of the places COPE Council members have managed to spread the word about COPE.
- COPE’s founders may have started small, but they had a vision from the beginning, as you’ll see in our interview with Michael Farthing, Richard Horton, and Richard Smith on pages 5 to 8.
- You may be surprised by how much COPE has accomplished. You’ll find a timeline and some recent COPE statistics on pages 6 and 8.
- In two personal essays, outgoing Chair Liz Wager and Vice Chair Sabine Kleinert describe what serving COPE has meant to them (pages 9 and 10).
- And finally, we meet incoming Chair Virginia Barbour and Vice Chair Charlotte Haug, who share their perspectives on publication ethics and the future of COPE (pages 11 and 12).

So make yourself a cup of tea, cut yourself a slice of cake, and join us at the table. It’s time to celebrate COPE’s 15th anniversary!

Jeannie



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New COPE Chair, Vice Chair and Secretaries

The 2012 Annual General Meeting will feature a number of changes in the make-up of the COPE Council. COPE's Chair, Liz Wager, and Vice Chair, Sabine Kleinert, will step down in March 2012 after completing their terms of office. (See their personal essays about what COPE has meant to them on pages 9 and 10). Both were very active in representing COPE at meetings throughout the world.

Succeeding Liz Wager as COPE Chair at the March 16 AGM will be Virginia Barbour, who is Chief Editor of *PLoS Medicine* and currently



New Chair
Virginia (Ginny) Barbour

Secretary of COPE. Sabine Kleinert will be succeeded by Charlotte Haug, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association*. As there was only one candidate for each position, elections were not required.

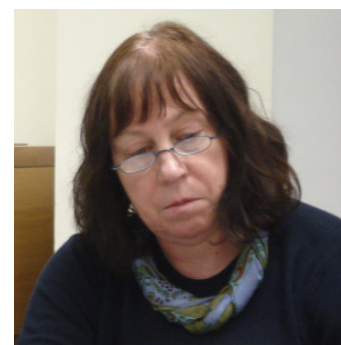
The position of Secretary, vacated by Ginny Barbour, will be filled for the first time by two Council members: André Van Steirteghem of Brussels, Editor-in-Chief of *Human Reproduction*, and Margaret Rees of Oxford, Editor-in-Chief of *Maturitas*.



New Co-Secretary
André Van Steirteghem



New Vice Chair
Charlotte Haug



New Co-Secretary
Margaret Rees

European Seminar to focus on "Correcting the literature"

Why are corrections needed? What are the appropriate ways to deal with expressions of concern, corrections and retractions? What is the scale of the problem, and what can go wrong?

Join COPE on Friday, March 16, 2012, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Charles Darwin House Conference Centre in London for the 2012 European Seminar, where we will look at the topic "Correcting the literature".

The seminar will feature three presentations:

- Andrew Sugden, Deputy Editor and International Managing Editor of *Science*, will talk about his experience handling retractions and how this has influenced their journal policies
- Joss Saunders, a lawyer from Blake Lapthorn, Oxford, will discuss the legal issues associated with expressions of concern, corrections and retractions
- Ed Pentz, from CrossRef, will talk about CrossMark and its importance in signalling the status of scholarly content.

Like COPE's first Asia-Pacific Seminar, held last November in Melbourne, the European seminar will include posters on publication ethics-oriented research, ethical policies, techniques, collaborations, and initiatives. In addition, there will be discussion of related cases and opportunities to network and share your experiences.

Seminar scholarships awarded

Two COPE member editors from developing countries were chosen from among 9 applicants to receive scholarships to attend COPE's European seminar and Annual General Meeting in London on March 16th, 2012. Angel Magar of Nepal, Founder and Chief Editor of the *World Journal of Health Sciences*, and Kusal Das of Bijapur, India, Editor in Chief of *Al Ameen Journal of Medical Sciences*, were selected based on a CV and letter of application explaining why they would benefit from attending the meeting. COPE plans to offer two scholarships to the European seminar each year.

COPE grant awarded to project on marketing-driven clinical trials

COPE is pleased to announce that the January 2012 grant (submissions received in December 2011) has been awarded to a group led by Sara Schroter of the *BMJ* (British Medical Journal), for the project “Characterization of trials published in medical journals to determine whether there are specific characteristics of trials that are designed primarily for the purpose of marketing and, if identified, what the prevalence and distribution of such trials is in the medical literature.”

According to the proposal, there is “increasing anecdotal evidence of publications describing trials that appear to be for marketing/promotional purposes rather than addressing a genuine clinical need. The publication of such trials has the potential to distort the medical literature and patient care. However, there has been no systematic attempt to characterize such trials.”

COPE accepts proposals for its

£5000 research grants each year in June and December. Whereas two applications were submitted in each of the 5 previous cycles—from June 2009 to June 2011—in December 2011 there was a large increase in submissions, with COPE receiving a total of 5 high-quality applications from research groups in a combination of 7 countries. Three of the applications were submitted by individuals or groups who had received COPE grants in the past.

Applications for the COPE Research Grant are evaluated by a subcommittee consisting of 3-5 Council members, according to the following criteria: (1) How pertinent is the research? (2) Is the research original? (3) Does the applicant have appropriate experience and/or departmental support to complete the project? (4) Are the methods appropriate for the question(s) asked? (5) Is this project value for money?

Applications which do not win can be resubmitted once, in the next cycle. The next deadline for applications is June 1, 2012. COPE especially welcomes new applicants, particularly from outside biomedicine.

Forum podcasts

Couldn't attend the December COPE Forum in London? No problem! Audio versions of the discussions are available at <http://publicationethics.org/cases>. Click on a title under Recent Cases. If audio is available you can click on the audio icon to listen, or choose "Download audio file" to save a personal copy of the discussion.

Chinese codes

The Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors and the Code of Conduct for Journal Publishers have been translated into Chinese and are available to download from the COPE website: <http://publicationethics.org/resources/code-conduct>. COPE would like to thank Council member Charley Miao for translating the texts.

French flowcharts

The complete set of 17 COPE flowcharts is now available in French! Many thanks to Hervé Maisonneuve for the translation and to Margaret Rees for the back translation. To download the files, go to <http://publicationethics.org/resources/flowcharts>.

Steve Yentis and Richard Green end terms



The March 2012 AGM will mark the end of COPE service for Council member Steve Yentis, Editor of *Anaesthesia*, and Ombudsman Richard Green. Among other projects, Steve headed the research grant evaluation committee and was involved in the development of COPE's retraction guidelines. Richard, appointed in 2004, was responsible for arbitrating complaints against COPE and disagreements between COPE members. COPE is grateful to both for their many years of service.

COPE provides support at home and abroad

COPE supports other organizations in a multitude of ways, from co-sponsoring and co-hosting meetings to providing speakers on ethical issues to sending messages to conference attendees in distant lands.

BMJ/COPE meeting on tackling research misconduct

On January 12, 2012, COPE co-hosted a meeting in London with the *BMJ* (*British Medical Journal*) to discuss how organizations can best respond to research misconduct. The meeting was co-chaired by *BMJ* Editor in Chief Fiona Godlee and COPE Chair Liz Wager.

Presenters from Sweden, Germany, and the USA talked about how those countries tackle misconduct investigations. The invited audience of about 50 people—ranging from major UK funders, institutes, and regulators, to journals, academic societies, and professional associations, to a patients' organization, eminent retired professors, and even a whistleblower—brought a variety of perspectives to the problem.

The attendees discussed a *BMJ* editorial calling for a more centralized approach to research integrity in the UK, and concerns that initial funding for an advisory body (the UK Research Integrity Office) had not been continued.

A consensus statement was drafted and approved in which UK institutions were called on to appoint their own Research Integrity Officers, to follow a Code of Conduct for research, and to develop effective systems to prevent and detect misconduct, protect whistleblowers, and ensure that suspected misconduct is properly investigated. The statement was published in the *BMJ* and is available on the COPE website at http://publicationethics.org/files/A_consensus_statement_on_research_misconduct_in_the_UK.pdf.

Responsible Research Publication

International standards for authors and editors entitled Responsible

Research Publication have now been published in the proceedings of the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity (which took place in Singapore in 2010). They are also available from the Guidelines section of the COPE website (<http://tinyurl.com/79aazqc>).

These standards are unusual (if not unique) in that they were developed by a group comprising editors and researchers from five continents working in many different fields of science, mathematics, medicine, and social sciences. Recognising the particular ethical challenges of research involving humans and animals, there is a separate section devoted to these, but beyond this, the aim was to define common ground and universal standards.

The documents were developed by Liz Wager and Sabine Kleinert (COPE Chair and Vice Chair). We hope that COPE members will endorse the standards and incorporate them into their journal instructions.

Council member Cindy Carter in Colombia

In May 2011, I was invited to speak at the first conference of the International Forum of Scientific Journals, Colombian Scientific Journals Network, held in Bogota, Colombia. The theme of the conference was "The editor's work and indexing strategies." I spoke critically about "Feminist Journal Editing, Journal Ranking Systems and Issues of Quality." Central to the conference was an exploration and sharing of experiences of editorial ethics across academic disciplines in light of different institutional pressures faced by journal editors

today. These pressures include issues around the peer review process, editorial workloads, and quality concerns due to increasing author submissions, and the influence of pressures to meet external indexing organisation benchmarks to secure abstracting and indexing certification, now often seen as making or breaking a journal. Representatives from Thomson Reuters and SCOPUS were also present, and offered insights into their selection criteria, how they judge scientific quality, and how journals might improve their rankings.

Indian seminar on ethical tensions

The Department of Library and Information Science, Punjabi University, Patiala (India), organized a national seminar from January 31 to February 1, 2012, on the theme "Ethical tensions for academics, researchers and publishers in an information society". Dr. Jaspal Singh, Vice Chancellor, emphasized that pragmatism and modernism should not take precedence over ethical concerns in academics and research. The seminar, featuring 15 papers and a panel discussion "Diverse Perspectives on Ethical Tensions", was attended by 100 delegates from all over India. COPE Chair Liz Wager contributed a welcome letter.



From left: Vice Chancellor Dr Jaspal Singh, Dr. Kalra, Prof Jagtar Singh, Dr. DV Singh, Prof. Prasher, Prof. Satija

Past, present and future: COPE celebrates 15 years

In recognition of COPE's progress over the 15 years since its founding, this Feature presents an interview with COPE founders Michael Farthing, Richard Smith, and Richard Horton, personal essays by outgoing Chair Liz Wager and outgoing Vice Chair Sabine Kleinert, and a profile of incoming Chair Ginny Barbour and incoming Vice Chair Charlotte Haug.

In the beginning... a Q&A with COPE's founders

Richard Horton, FRCP, FMedSci,
Editor, *The Lancet*

Richard Smith. Formerly Editor of the *BMJ* (British Medical Journal) and chief executive of the BMJ Publishing Group. Now Director of the UnitedHealth Chronic Disease Initiative, Chair of Patients Know Best, Chair of the Cochrane Library Oversight Committee, and a Professor at Imperial College and Warwick University.

Michael Farthing, MD, DSc Med, FRCP, FMedSci
Previously Principal of St George's, University of London, Editor of *Gut*, and founding Chair of COPE. Now Vice Chancellor and Professor of Medicine, University of Sussex, and Vice Chair, UK Research Integrity Office.

Q: *How did the idea for COPE come about?*

Richard Smith: Mike Farthing had become the editor of *Gut*, one of the journals of the BMJ Publishing Group, and had encountered some ethical problems. I was the editor of the *BMJ* and the chief executive of the BMJ Publishing Group, and sat on both the editorial board and the management committee of *Gut*, so Mike came to discuss his problems with me. He

suggested that it would be worth discussing these questions in a larger group. We would all be able to learn something. I agreed and said that I'd ask Richard Horton, editor of *The Lancet*, if he was interested. He was, and was the one who suggested the name COPE.

Q: *Can you describe COPE's first meeting in April 1997?*

Richard Smith: It was in BMA House, where most of the early meetings were held, and there were perhaps 15 of us, several of whom were editors at the *BMJ*. We discussed cases, and I think that we found it interesting and all learnt something. It was a very informal atmosphere, and we laughed and had fun.

One of the issues that came up right at the beginning was about the dangers of being a kangaroo court and running the risk of libel or slander. Ian Kennedy, a lawyer, advised us that we had better discuss cases anonymously and that we should be clear that we weren't making decisions, we were simply offering advice to editors, which they might or might not follow.

Michael Farthing: There was an atmosphere of excitement and optimism that we were beginning something new that would be genuinely useful to editors and the wider research community.

Q: *How long were you actively involved in COPE, and in what capacity/roles?*

Richard Smith: Until I left the *BMJ* in 2004. I didn't ever have a formal position.

Richard Horton: We worked together for about 5 years or so. We didn't really have roles. We just liked to meet and tell each other stories. This was the golden age of collaboration between medical journals. Sadly, we have lost it.

Michael Farthing: I continued as Chair of COPE until 2003, which was about the time that I completed my six-year term as Editor of *Gut*. It was time to move on, as membership of COPE was beginning to increase

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Michael Farthing

FEATURE: 15 YEARS OF COPE

Continued

quite rapidly at that time, and there were others who were ready to take on leadership roles, including the task of Chair. I am a strong supporter of the Nolan principles of conduct in public life and strongly encourage refreshment in all roles of responsibility.

Q: COPE started as a group of medical journal editors in London. When and why did COPE expand outside of the UK?

Richard Horton: I think we wanted to be international from the beginning. There was the ICMJE [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors] before COPE, and some of the European members would come to our meetings. We also admired some of the institutions abroad—such as the Danish

Committee on Scientific Dishonesty—and wanted to learn from those experiences.

Richard Smith: We were never exclusively British. Anybody could come along, but it was obviously easier for editors based in London to come to meetings. From the beginning people from outside Britain came to the large meetings we held annually.

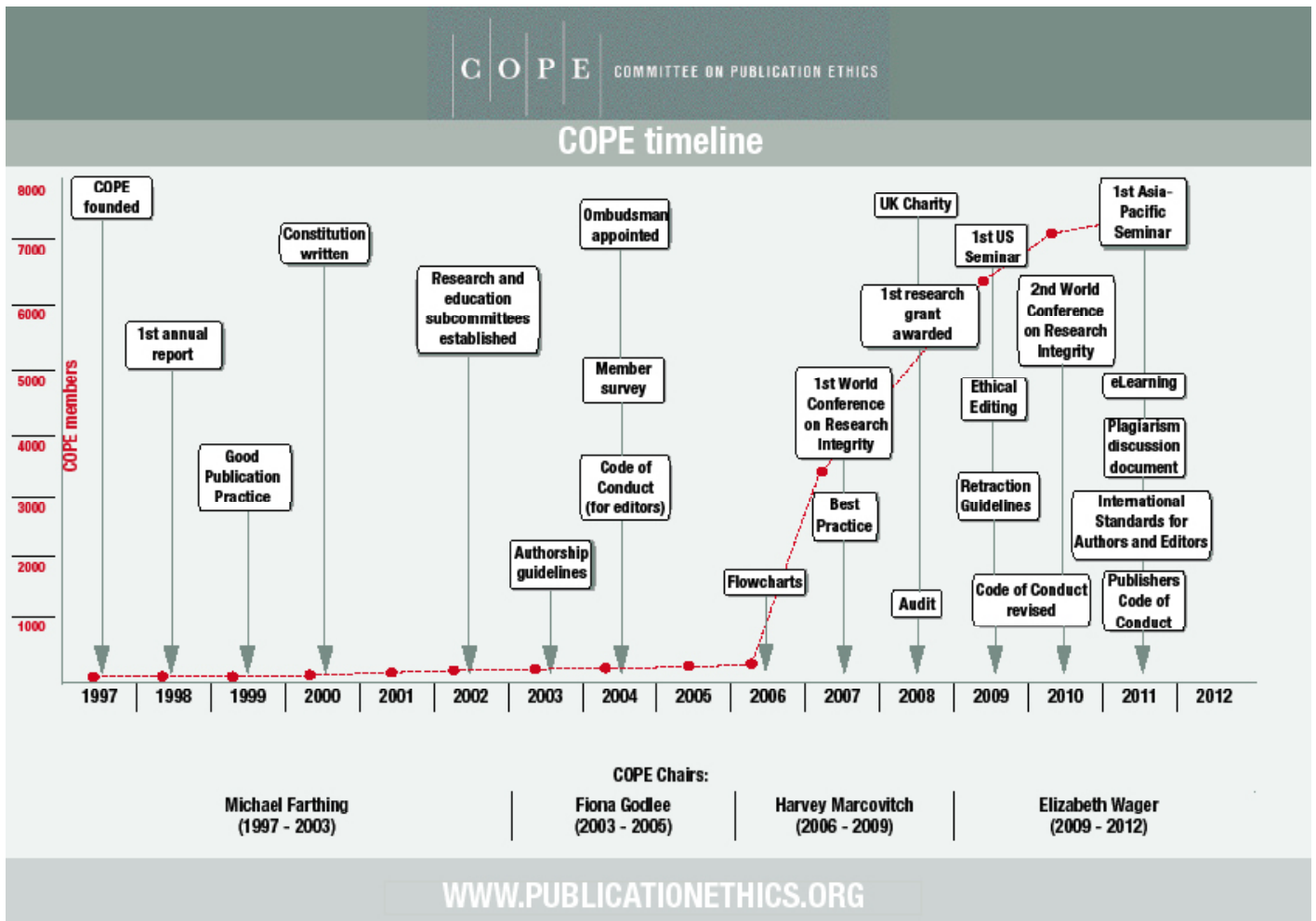
Michael Farthing: Our meetings were regularly attended by the editor of the *Dutch Medical Journal*, and we had close contact with Scandinavian academics who were leading on research integrity in their respective countries. Nick Steneck from the ORI, and Drummond Rennie, an editor of *JAMA*, often attended COPE seminars and were both strong challengers and supporters of what we were

trying to achieve. COPE wanted to be international from the start and it was important to build relationships across national boundaries.

Q: When and why did COPE expand to include nonmedical journals? Did the impetus come from within COPE or from the journals themselves?

Michael Farthing: My recollection is that COPE moved outside biomedicine quite early in its incarnation. I remember discussing requests for advice relating to papers in the humanities and social science journals within the first year or two. COPE never solicited cases, but our doors were open to all, which I think was one of the attractions.

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Q: In the 2000 COPE annual report Michael Farthing wrote that COPE “needs to proceed on a more formal basis with a Constitution, elected officers and a management committee as well as clear operating guidelines.” Why?

Richard Horton: Because we wanted to evolve from an informal group of friends to an organization with some ability to solve the problems, often very serious, we were discovering. These problems involved fabrication and falsification, personal and institutional malfeasance. Without a more formal mechanism we could not fully address the issues we were finding.

Richard Smith: It became apparent that we met a real need. More and more editors came to meetings, and people came to us seeking help. It became clear that editors had special needs and that the establishment in Britain was not taking research misconduct seriously. So we needed to move COPE beyond being an informal self-help group. And something that particularly interested me—making editors accountable—could only be achieved by becoming more formal. From the beginning I thought that we could be taken seriously only if we were concerned to regulate ourselves—not just authors, reviewers, and others.

Q: Has COPE grown in a different direction than you thought it would when you started it?

Michael Farthing: The most surprising development for me is the way in which COPE has been able to expand membership over a relatively short period of time across the globe. To be a member of COPE, I believe, says something about your journal and publishing house. It means you take publication ethics and research integrity seriously, and are willing to

support an organization that has taken a leadership position.

Richard Smith: I'm very impressed by how it has grown. I think that an organization becomes serious once it has enough resources to employ staff.

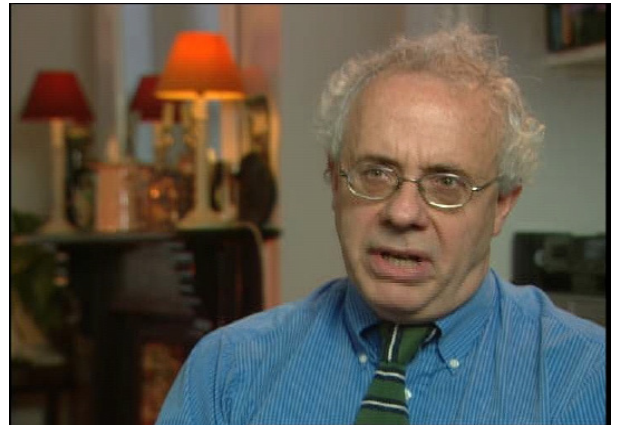
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Michael Farthing

Q: In 2003 the list of COPE members fit on a single sheet of paper (1½ sides). Now there are more than 7000 member journals. What do you see as the advantages and/or disadvantages of being so big?

Richard Smith: Size mostly brings advantages—by increasing resources, credibility, and impact. COPE has the huge advantages that it is international and covers disciplines other than medicine. Research misconduct is an international problem—and yet most bodies that are concerned with it are national and restricted in scope.

Richard Horton: It shows the enormous demand for a mechanism to help resolve questions of research and



Richard Smith

publication misconduct. And, I think, the commitment to address those issues fully. This is good. I think the only downside is that a focus on what goes bad doesn't do justice to all that is good in our research systems. It's wrong to paint a picture of research misconduct being alive and well in the UK without saying that the research enterprise delivers enormous benefits for health. The message from COPE risks getting one sided, perhaps distorting the public's view of research.

Michael Farthing: I do not believe there are any serious disadvantages of the way in which COPE has grown. Frankly, the more journals and publishers that engage in a publication ethics agenda, the better. The broader the membership, the greater the expertise and the louder the voice.

Q: What do you see as COPE's most important achievements, products, services, resources?

Richard Horton: Providing, first, a vital institutional memory to support good research practice, and, second, a practical means to solve some very difficult problems. I think COPE has become a national treasure.

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Richard Smith: The most important thing that COPE did in my mind was to make it clear that if editors suspected misconduct they had a duty to do something. They couldn't ignore it—even if the misconduct was associated with one of the 90% of articles that they rejected (the usual rejection rate for a general medical journal.) This had not been the case before, and it took a while for editors to accept the duty. COPE also sensitized us to ethical problems. In the past we simply hadn't seen them.

but it has continued to maintain a leadership role across a whole range of activities.

Q: In 1998, COPE Chairman Michael Farthing wrote: "COPE is an experiment." At what point do you think COPE became an institution? Or hasn't it yet?

Richard Horton: I think it became an institution after our first meeting. We suddenly realized we needed one another.



Richard Horton

Michael Farthing: I believe COPE put publication ethics on the map. COPE stood alongside other voices to say that research misconduct and publication misconduct were problems that needed attention. The advisory service for whistle blowers and journal editors was, I believe, one of its great early achievements,

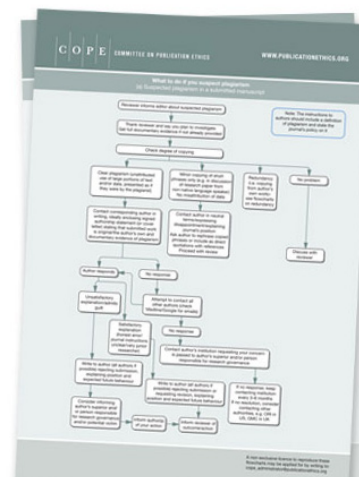
“... most of the cases brought to light during the first year of COPE’s life related to unpublished manuscripts that were in the process of internal and external review. How should an editor respond when s/he discovers that 70 to 80 per cent of a newly submitted manuscript has been plagiarized from other work?”

Excerpt from COPE’s 1998 Annual Report
<http://publicationethics.org/about/annualreports>

Top 10 website statistics, October through December 2011

Number of times a PDF was downloaded

COPE Code of Conduct and Best Practice Guidelines for Journal Editors	867
Responsible research publication: international statements for authors	418
How to handle authorship disputes: a guide for new researchers	388
All flowcharts	385
A short guide to ethical editing for new editors	292
Ethical Editing, Winter 2011	166
Subscription rates	158
What to do if you suspect plagiarism in a submitted manuscript	118
Retractions: Guidance from the Committee on Publication	103
Responsible research publication position statements	91



Number of times a page was accessed on the website

Homepage	18412	Resources	2120
Guidelines	4878	Code of Conduct	1562
Flowcharts	3849	eLearning	1470
About COPE	3494	Members	1325
Cases	2281	Cases 2011	1256

Most popular referring websites

Emerald Press	999	Elsevier	217
Dove Press	358	Oxford Journals	200
Palgrave MacMillan	350	PLoS Biology	146
Linkedin	277	Wiley Online Library	137
PLoS One	261	Twitter	134

A few F's . . . as experienced by Liz Wager

The abiding impressions of my 6 years on COPE Council can be summed up by Four F's: fraud, flowcharts, friendship, and foreign trips. I have undoubtedly learnt a great deal and become ever more fascinated by the complex issues that fall under the broad heading of publication ethics.

To start with the obvious one – fraud. I never cease to be amazed how often, at a Forum meeting, somebody will remark 'I never heard of that before'. It might be tempting to think that after 15 years of giving advice, COPE would have encountered every possible situation that can create headaches for editors, but that's not the case. I think this emphasizes the value of COPE's very flexible approach (so perhaps flexibility is another F). COPE started life as a 'self-help group for editors' and it has never tried to rely on a book of rules, but examines each case individually. Of course, we have seen some patterns in the types of problems that trouble editors, which have allowed us to codify our advice to some extent, and that leads me to the second F, the flowcharts.

I developed these on a rainy August weekend when I would rather have been out in the garden, but was stuck indoors because of the miserable weather. Initially, I approached them as a mental puzzle, rather in the way one might tackle a crossword puzzle. I wasn't sure whether there would be a solution, but I thought I'd enjoy playing around with them. After a few hours, they looked promising, so I brought them to Council, who removed a few mistakes and suggested some improvements. Then my inelegant Word documents were converted

into slick PDFs by a designer and we stuck them on the website. I could never have dreamt that they would be so popular among editors, and they are the only thing I've ever written that has been translated into many languages.

COPE's collaborative system of providing informal advice spills over to Council, and many of these collaborations have warmed into friendships. You might imagine that a bunch of editors would fight over the wording of new documents, with everybody wanting to have the last word, but this isn't the case, and everything I've written has benefited enormously from careful scrutiny and helpful amendments from other Council members whose wisdom I value.

As COPE has grown, exciting opportunities for spreading the word around the globe have arisen. I've been particularly lucky to have enjoyed trips to the USA, Brazil, Singapore, China, Portugal, and the Philippines on behalf of COPE.

Meeting editors around the world and seeing their appreciation of COPE has been a great privilege.

If I'm being totally honest, I will admit to a fifth F: frustration. It has often felt there were many useful things we could do but there simply weren't enough hours in the day or willing volunteers to put them into practice, but I guess this is a common experience for any voluntary group. But my final F would actually be fun – publication ethics may sound a pretty dusty subject, but working with a good team and feeling that sometimes we've been able to make a difference has been a lot of fun, and I'll miss it!

Liz Wager

Elizabeth (Liz) Wager is a freelance medical writer, editor, and trainer with a degree in zoology from Oxford University. She set up her own company, Sideview, in 2001. She has been a member of COPE since 1999, serving as Secretary from 2007 to 2009 and as Chair from 2009 to 2012.



Liz before a workshop on publication ethics in Chongqing, China. The banner behind her publicized the meeting—and COPE.

My journey with COPE . . . recounted by Sabine Kleinert

When I think back, it is incredible that I have been involved in COPE for 12 years, almost from the very beginning of the organisation, certainly from the beginning of my career as an Editor at *The Lancet*. What a journey it has been! When Richard Horton appointed me to *The Lancet*, he very early on dragged me along to the then very informal COPE meetings and instilled in my mind a curiosity about publication ethics. He regarded it as the best education a newly minted editor can have about everything to do with being an editor, a profession that has very little formal training. Having been used to the rather more structured medical system, making the jump to being a full-time editor at times felt like wading through an unknown muddy forest, not exactly sure about the way and where it leads to. Now, I feel like I have grown up with COPE and COPE has grown up, too.

The first few years at COPE were awe inspiring, with the great and the good, such as Richard Smith

and Mike Farthing, brimming with experience, wit, and banter. The meetings felt like an evening in the pub or, sometimes, at a comedy club, although—sadly — they were held during the afternoon in the rather more sober BMA house in London. Women were in the minority, reflecting the general editorial landscape, I guess, and to me as a German, it all felt very British.

But that was then, with COPE in its infancy. COPE's early childhood years were spent with tentative attempts to draw up codes and guidelines, involve more editors from smaller, still largely biomedical journals, and raise publication ethics issues more widely in annual seminars and annual reports. When COPE constituted a Council—first nominated, later elected—and a Chair and Officers, and finally became a charity, it was firmly on the path to become a thinking, breathing, and growing being in its own right, which we from the Council as parents were guiding along to

develop in the best possible way.

Now, COPE is very much in its teenage years, with an ever growing number of friends with different backgrounds, huge ambitions, knowing no boundaries in the world. Members range from Abacus to Zygon, and come from Argentina to Zimbabwe. I learnt that issues in publication ethics and research integrity seem to have more similarities than differences, whether it is a molecular genetics journal or a gender and dance one. Our Council now also starts to reflect this broadening of topics and geography, with Council members from Iran and China joining not so long ago.

I am, like a mother, proud of this teenage creature that strides out into the world and is becoming more and more self-confident and self-reliant. At the same time, I feel this tinge of sadness to let it go and make its own future. Will it succeed? Of course it will! It has been an amazing journey, I have learnt a lot, have made many new friends, and have enjoyed tremendously contributing to, and making my journey with this organization.

Sabine Kleinert

Sabine Kleinert studied medicine in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the USA, and trained as a pediatrician in the UK and Belgium. She joined The Lancet as a full-time Medical Editor in 1998, and is currently Senior Executive Editor. She has been attending COPE meetings since 1999, joined Council in 2001, and served as Vice Chair from 2006 to 2012.



Sabine traveling through Berlin

Looking ahead . . . with Virginia Barbour and Charlotte Haug

From 2009 to 2012, COPE was led by two women: Liz Wager and Sabine Kleinert. In March 2012 that tradition will continue, as Virginia (Ginny) Barbour, Chief Editor of *PLoS Medicine*, and Charlotte Haug, Editor-in-Chief of *Tidsskrift for Den norske legeförening (The Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association)*, take over as Chair and Vice Chair, respectively.

Personal backgrounds

Both Ginny and Charlotte worked clinically as doctors, earned PhDs, and did research before moving into medical publishing. Whereas Ginny began in hematology in England, and did postdoctoral research in the United States in the regulation of globin genes, Charlotte studied infectious diseases and immunology in Norway, and later focused on organisation, priority setting, and supervision of healthcare systems in Norway as well as globally.

Ginny, who was one of the three founders of the weekly open access journal *PLoS Medicine* in 2004, is Editorial Director of Medicine Publishing at PLoS (Public Library of Science), which publishes 7 peer-reviewed open access journals. She has "ultimate responsibility for what *PLoS Medicine* publishes and overall input into PLoS publication policies for all of medicine."



COPE Chair Ginny Barbour

Since 2002, Charlotte has been editor of the Norwegian Medical Association's bi-weekly print and online journal, which is published in Norwegian, has a print circulation of 28,000, and is distributed to all Norwegian doctors. The free, open access journal has been available online since 2000, and the website has an average of 6000-7000 unique users every day.

COPE service

Both women have been COPE members since becoming editors of their journals. "We had our first COPE case before the journal even launched," says Ginny. Charlotte was asked to join the COPE Council in 2005, "at a time when COPE was trying to develop from a discussion club/forum for a few editors into a larger and more formal organization. I thought COPE could serve a larger audience and was happy to be part of that development."

Ginny became a Council member in 2005, and took over as Interim Secretary in June 2009. "As an officer I've become more and more aware of how important COPE is and how much potential there is for it to really influence the field of publication ethics and to build liaisons with other organizations," she says. "I felt that now is a great time to have the opportunity to lead COPE—under Liz and Sabine's leadership the organization has gone from strength to strength."

For Charlotte, the position of Vice Chair had similar appeal. "I realize that ethical questions in research and publication are not going to go away any time soon.

I wanted to serve as Vice Chair to be able to contribute to the way COPE works and moves forward. Also, I am particularly interested in COPE being more global, and thought it would be a good thing for COPE to have a Vice Chair who was not from the UK."

Issues facing COPE

There are many important topics to address in the field of publication ethics today. "I think that the publishing revolution that is happening because of the Internet is leading to some new challenges," says Ginny, "such as ease of plagiarism and its detection, what authorship really means in a time when papers have many people who contribute in complex projects, and how to deal with post-publication review. I think that COPE has to address these new challenges head on, while at the same time helping editors to preserve the integrity of the scientific literature in the same way that it has done before."

Charlotte names the Forum meetings and website as COPE's most valuable products, and believes eLearning is a good approach to helping editors

Continued



COPE Vice Chair Charlotte Haug

FEATURE:15 YEARS OF COPE

around the world in a more direct way. For Ginny, COPE's most valuable assets are "its members—their collected knowledge, and that of our Council members. This is what makes us such a valuable organization—because we can call upon a large amount of experience when it comes to the consideration of cases." But she echoes Charlotte in saying that "the technology we have—our website, with all its resources, including flowcharts and eLearning—gives our members the tools they need to handle the cases they come across."

COPE's future

COPE has more eLearning modules in production, and plans to publish more discussion documents on specific aspects of publication ethics, says Ginny, as well as to improve how services are provided to members via the website, and to organize seminars

in more locations outside of the US and the UK. Charlotte says her focus in the coming three years will be on globalization and eLearning, whereas Ginny plans to concentrate her efforts on ensuring that "we are robust as an organization, so we can continue to serve our members. I'd also like to raise the profile of publication ethics more widely," she says. "Not just among members, but also among the wider audience to whom publication ethics matters."

Charlotte sees COPE expanding in the future by "being more for each of the member journals." Ginny also expects the membership base to expand. "It's very important for us that we continue to attract more members outside of biomedicine and more members for whom English is not their first language," says Ginny. "Our council is now beginning to reflect that diversity, which is a big step forward."

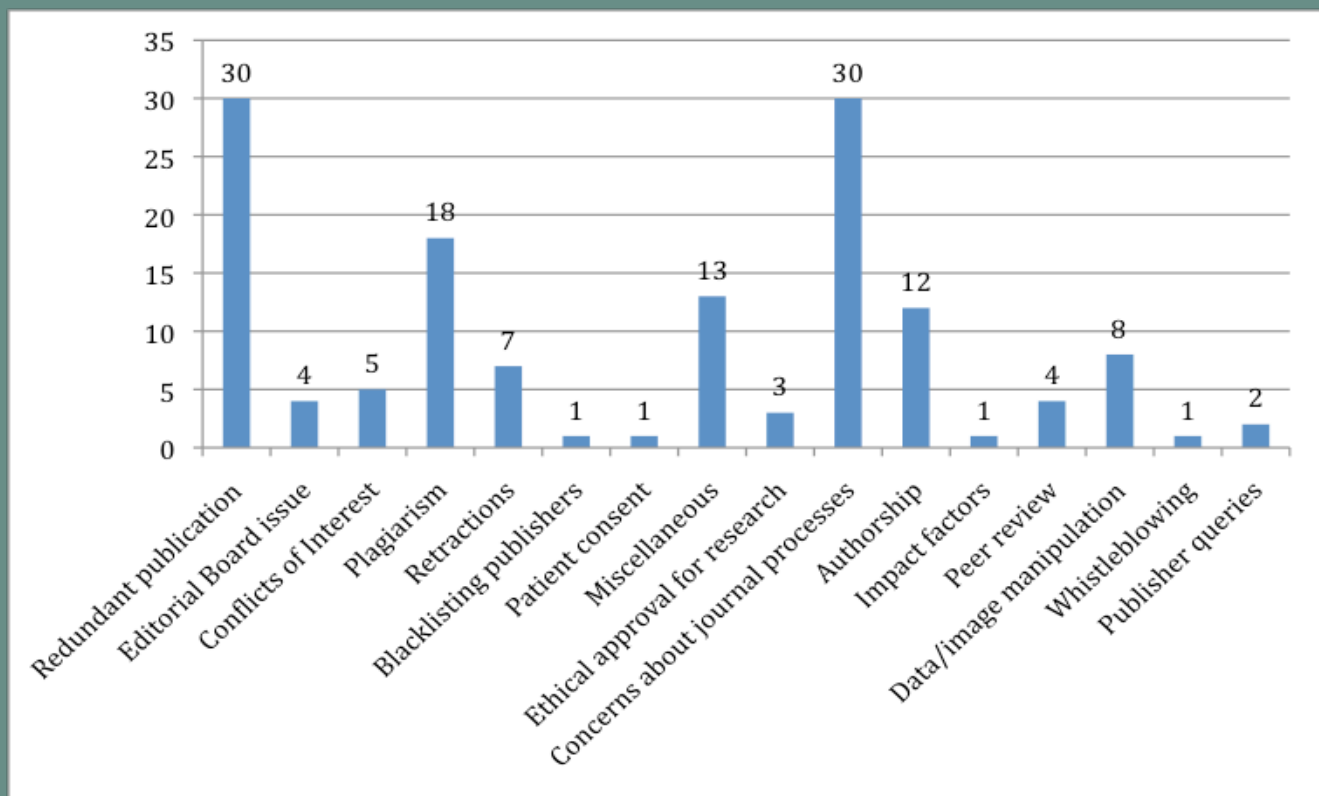
Giving and receiving

Both women believe that the benefits of serving COPE are extensive, both for them personally as well as for their journals.

"As an officer I have the opportunity to be involved with interesting problems and editors from around the world. This has allowed me to become much more knowledgeable about ethics—and this can only benefit PLoS more widely," says Ginny.

"My COPE involvement has made me aware of how ethics is involved in almost every decision I make as an editor," says Charlotte. "Editing a journal is about making decisions about what to publish and what not to publish—every day."

Type of queries received by the COPE office, Feb 11 - Feb 12



COPE Case 11-27

"Author creates bogus email accounts for proposed reviewers"

Case 11-27, discussed at the December 2011 COPE Forum, reported on a novel situation: an author who recommended potential reviewers at submission, provided e-mail addresses which didn't actually belong to the reviewers, and then submitted (or arranged for someone else to submit) reviews which appeared to have come from those reviewers.

This was considered a very serious form of misconduct. "There are legal issues with this. He's actually impersonating someone else," said Ginny Barbour, Chief Editor of *PloS Medicine*. "This might be criminal," added Charlotte Haug, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the Norwegian Medical Association*. "He's stealing identities."

The editor had written to the author, saying that the author's conduct was unacceptable, but had received no reply. It was agreed that the editor should report the incident to the author's institution, and could

also consider investigating other papers by the same author already published in his journal, as well as publishing an editorial. COPE Council member Irene Hames recommended that editors always double-check the emails that authors provide for reviewers. "Even if they're not bogus, they're usually out of date."

For details of the case and to listen to the podcast discussion, go to <http://publicationethics.org/case/author-creates-bogus-email-accounts-proposed-reviewers>.

Datebook

March 16, 2012—"Correcting the Literature," COPE annual European Seminar, London, UK; www.publicationethics.org

April 23-25, 2012—"Practical Solutions for a Complex Medical Publications World," International Society for Medical Publication Professionals (ISMPP) 8th Annual meeting, Baltimore, Maryland, USA; www.ismpp.org

May 18-21, 2012—"Our Authors, Ourselves: Science Editing and Publishing in a Global Market," Council of Science Editors annual meeting, Seattle, Washington, USA; <http://tinyurl.com/82azjj4>

Words from the wise

"The past is but the beginning of a beginning, and all that is and has been is but the twilight of the dawn."

H.G. Wells, 1901

"The mind of man is capable of anything—because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future."

Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness, 1902

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me."

Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, 1843

Last laugh by Annemarie Glaser



Tea for 10

Tea for 100

Tea for 1000?