

# Nurse Author & Editor

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### Nurse Editors Active in COPE

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For those who do not know about the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the organization has much to offer nurse editors in support of the integrity of the publication process. COPE was formed in 1997 to provide a "forum for editors of academic journals to discuss issues relating to the integrity of the work submitted to, or published in, their journals" (<http://publicationethics.org/about>). From humble beginnings, the organization now claims over 6400 members worldwide. Many major publishing houses have signed up their journals as members (usually it is one or several of the editors who are the active participants), but there are other members with an interest in publication ethics. As a publication of Wiley-Blackwell, Nurse Author & Editor is a COPE member.

### International Activities

In December 2010 COPE held its 2nd US Forum and Seminar on Plagiarism at the National Academies of Science in Washington DC. The Forum is an opportunity for editors to present cases for discussion by the Council, which is composed of 12 members elected from the total membership of COPE. In the recent election held in November, Geri Pearson, editor-in-chief of Perspectives in Psychiatric Care, was the first nurse elected to the Council. Geri was also one of the attendees at the December COPE meeting, along with me and Kathleen Gross, editor-in-chief of the Journal of Radiology Nursing. We had ample opportunity to network with the other participants and I presented a case of plagiarism in a submitted manuscript that was caught through the online plagiarism detection software. Because the headquarters of COPE are in the UK, most of the regular meetings of the Forum are held there, but there is an effort to hold meetings in other locations around the world. At the other meetings outside the UK, cases of ethical misconduct in the publishing world are presented in the same format as the regular Forum. As in our meeting in the US, the resulting discussion demonstrated that all editors struggle with similar issues.

For me, one of the outcomes of US meeting was the realization that editors are taking an increasingly strong stand against any misconduct by authors and reviewers. In fact, the recommendations from the COPE Council, which follow the general guidance provided by the COPE 's Code of Conduct, are that ethical misconduct such as plagiarism or data fabrication must be reported to employers and funding agencies so that proper investigations into the allegations can be carried out. A common thread through the discussions was the desire by the editors to "find out what happened" before referring the problem back to the institution where it originated. The consensus was that this is not an efficient or realistic solution to the problem. First, journal editors and publishers do not have time to conduct an investigation into an alleged infraction. Second, once the determination has been made that an author has fabricated data or plagiarized material, all previous work by that author is called into question. There is sufficient evidence to support that notion. Recent retractions related to the

work of one researcher resulted from an institutional investigation; of 21 total published articles, 10 had been published in Anesthesia & Analgesia and the remaining 11 were published in other journals ([http://publicationethics.org/files/u661/EthicalEditing\\_Winter2010\\_final\\_2.pdf](http://publicationethics.org/files/u661/EthicalEditing_Winter2010_final_2.pdf)). Conducting an investigation across multiple projects, journals, and grants could only be completed by the employer of the researcher.

## Resources

The COPE website (<http://publicationethics.org/>) contains a wealth of information for members as well as non-members. The Publication Ethics Blog contains current information and links to stories in the lay and professional media related to ethics breaches. In situations where similar cases have been presented to the COPE Council, a link to the case and the recommendation are available. A quarterly newsletter titled Ethical Editing provides updates on ethical issues related to publishing. A separate section of the website contains the cases presented to the Council and decisions, and the cases can be searched by keywords to assist anyone trying to deal with similar issues. Finally, the flowcharts, guidelines and sample letters are a valuable resource for editors making decisions about the most common ethical issues such as plagiarism, redundant publication, fabricated data, guest/ghost/gift authorship, and many other dilemmas.

There are new and exciting features planned for COPE in the coming year. A big project on the horizon is the development of a Publisher's Code of Ethics. From the beginning of COPE, publishers have played an important role in the organization with several opting to pay for all their journals to belong to COPE. Publishers provide the platforms for our publications and in so doing they assume a significant amount of responsibility for the integrity of the scientific record. But publishing is a business as well and some may see publishing only as an opportunity to make money or pedal influence. Good publishers make money without compromising ethical standards, but as Jeannie Wurz states in the Winter 2010 issue of Ethical Editing

([http://publicationethics.org/files/u661/EthicalEditing\\_Winter2010\\_final\\_2.pdf](http://publicationethics.org/files/u661/EthicalEditing_Winter2010_final_2.pdf)): "Publishing has evolved to the point where we now have ghost journals and ghost editors." Clearly, the COPE member publishers have a stake in assuring that all publishing is carried out in an ethical fashion.

## Nurse Editors and COPE

Nursing will be represented on the COPE Council by Geri Pearson for the next 3 years. Nurse editors interested in running for the Council in the future should watch for notices about pending nominations and elections. In order to be active in COPE, nurse editors whose journals are COPE members should be sure they are registered as members and actively participate in discussions whenever possible. In cases of ethical dilemmas, nurse editors can consult the COPE flowcharts or submit a case to the COPE Council for review. Nurse editors who encounter resistance from their publishers or associations related to exposing ethical issues can find support from COPE to do the right thing. Editors who find newsworthy information related to publishing ethics can share it for the ethics blog on <http://friendfeed.com/publication-ethics>

Congratulations to Geri Pearson on her election to the COPE Council! I urge other nurse editors to become more active in COPE.

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