Thursday, 11:35 – 11:55 am

Orthopaedists Behaving Badly

Guest Research Speaker

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n – nothing to disclose

I. One of the major roles of scientific journal editors is to preserve the integrity of the scientific literature. Major issues of concern include:

- Redundant Publication
- Plagiarism
- Conflict of Interest
- Ethical Approval of Research

II. In 1999, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) was organized, and included representation primarily from British medical journals, but over 30 journals including the British Medical Journal, Lancet and JBJS-B were involved. Some of the issues addressed by the COPE guidelines include:

- Study Design
- Data Analysis
- Authorship
- Conflict of Interest
- Peer Review
- Redundant Publication
- Plagiarism
- Dealing with Misconduct

Unfortunately over the last four years, the American volume of the Journal of Bone & Joint Surgery has been involved in cases of research misconduct, fraud, duplicate publication, plagiarism and redundant publication (“The least publishable unit”; “salami slicing”; or "meat extender”).

III. Most of these events come to light through serendipity, usually from the allegations of reviewers or readers.

IV. Once an allegation has been presented, confirmation of the concerns occurs by:

- Editorial side-by-side review
- Independent review
- Electronic plagiarism detection (text and images)

V. Once an event has been confirmed, the author is confronted in writing and asked to explain the circumstances.

VI. Action taken by the journal(s) is based on the author's response and the COPE guidelines. The response must be consistent over time, and consistent by both journals involved.
VII. Possible actions against author(s) include:
- Suspension from publication (typically two years)
- A report to the head of their institution(s)

VIII. Other corrective actions include:
- Retraction of manuscript prior to publication
- A Letter to the Editor from the author
- Institutional punishment as it sees fit.

IX. This is not a problem unique to orthopaedic surgery. “Our findings suggest that US scientists engage in a range of behaviors extending far beyond falsification, fabrication and plagiarism.” (“Scientists Behaving Badly” by Martinson, et al. Nature, June, 2005)

X. Prevention of these unfortunate circumstances is the most important and effective approach. Prevention can be accomplished by:
- Spreading the word
- Advising and educating authors better
- Mentoring: departmental review of all proposed manuscripts
- Those journals (“official journals”) requiring submission of meeting podium presentations should exercise greater caution.
- Punishing the offenders through journal sanctions or the AAOS Standards of Professionalism (SOPs)

XI. AAOS SOPs: Research and Academic Responsibilities, Mandatory Standards
- “An orthopaedic surgeon shall report those who engage in fraudulent or deceptive research to the appropriate authorities”
- “An orthopaedic surgeon shall disclose the existence of duplicate articles, manuscripts or other materials that report his or her scientific or clinical research.”

XII. AAOS Professional Compliance Program
- “...set minimal levels of acceptable conduct for all fellows and members…”
- “Alleged violations of the SOPs may serve as the basis for a formal grievance to AAOS.”
- “If a grievance is upheld, the AAOS Board of Directors may censure, suspend or expel a member…”

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References