



**Committee on  
Publication Ethics**



# **Publication – the role of editors and journals Current best practices**

**Liz Wager**; presented to the World Conference on Research Integrity,  
Lisbon, Portugal; September 2007

**[www.publicationethics.org.uk](http://www.publicationethics.org.uk)**

# What can editors do?

- **Detect**
- **Prevent**
- **Educate**
- **Promote**
- **Inform**



# What can editors do?

- Detect **research** and **publication m/c**
- Prevent **publication** misconduct
- Educate **authors**
- Promote **good practice**
  - be aware of how journal policies may influence behaviour
- Inform **authorities, employers**



# What editors **CANNOT** do

- Prevent research misconduct
- Investigate research misconduct
- Settle disputes (e.g. authorship)
- Investigate most types of publication misconduct



- although they may instigate investigations



# Misconduct: definitions

## Research misconduct

- Fabrication
- Falsification
- Unethical research



## Publication misconduct

- Plagiarism
- Biased/selective reporting
- Authorship abuse
- Redundant publication
- Undeclared Col
- Reviewer misconduct
- Abuse of position

**Editors can't turn back the clock**



# Organizations concerned about publication ethics

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**COPE:** Committee on Publication Ethics

**WAME:** World Assoc of Medical Editors

**CSE:** Council of Science Editors

**ICMJE:** Intl Cttee of Med Jnl Editors



# Relevant guidelines

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- **COPE**: Code of Conduct, Best Practice, Flow charts
- **ICMJE**: Uniform Requirements
- **WAME**: Policy statements, Recommendations on public ethics
- **CSE**: Policy statements, White papers



# Other guidelines

(not from/for editors)

- **Good Publication Practice for pharmaceutical companies (GPP)**  
[www.gpp-guidelines.org](http://www.gpp-guidelines.org)
- **European/American Medical Writers Association guidelines (EMWA, AMWA)**  
[www.emwa.org](http://www.emwa.org) [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org)
- **Declaration of Helsinki (WMA)**  
<http://www.wma.net/e/policy/b3.htm>



# What do the guidelines cover?

## 1: Policies for journals/editors

	Role of editor	Role of reviewer	Peer review	Advertising	Media relations
<b>COPE</b>	?	?	?	?	?
<b>CSE</b>	?	?			?
<b>ICMJE</b>	?	?	?	?	?
<b>WAME</b>	?		?	?	



# What do the guidelines cover?

## 2: Policies for authors

	Redundant pub.	Plagiarism	Fabrication	Unethical research	Col	Authorship
<b>COPE</b>	?	?	?	?	?	?
<b>CSE</b>		?	?	?	?	?
<b>ICMJE</b>	?				?	?
<b>WAME</b>	?	?			?	?



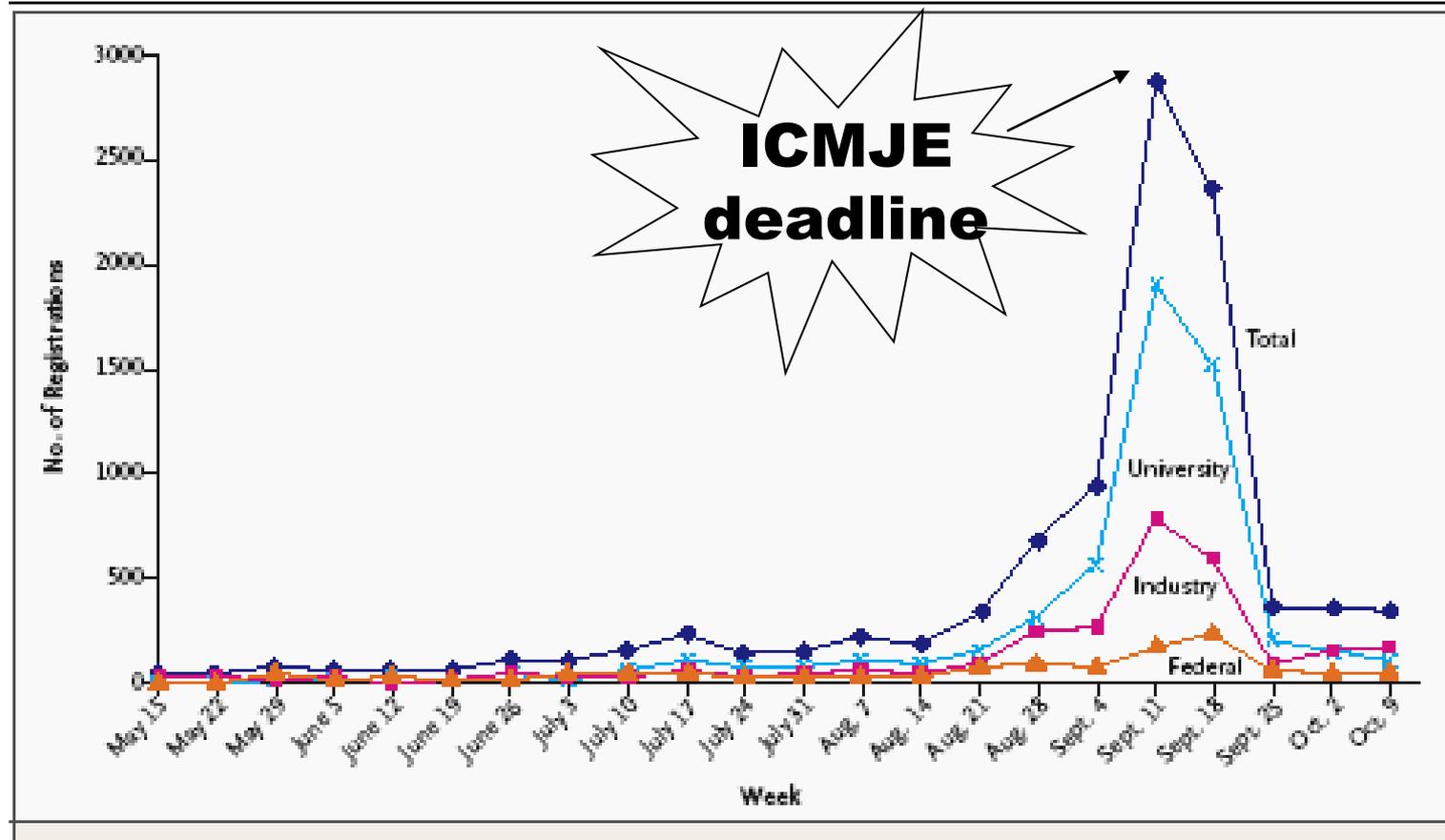
# Editors have been influential in:

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- **Declaring competing interests**
- **Ensuring by-line reflects contributions**
  - **Preventing ghost / guest authorship**
  - **Defining role of professional writers**
- **Reducing publication bias by encouraging trial registration**



# New trials registered at clinicaltrials.gov May - Oct 2005



Currently contains >40,000 trials



# Problems

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- **Little data on incidence of publication misconduct**
- **Hard to identify real trends**
- **Instruction is not enough**
- **Editors need to work with academic institutions, funders, regulators ...**



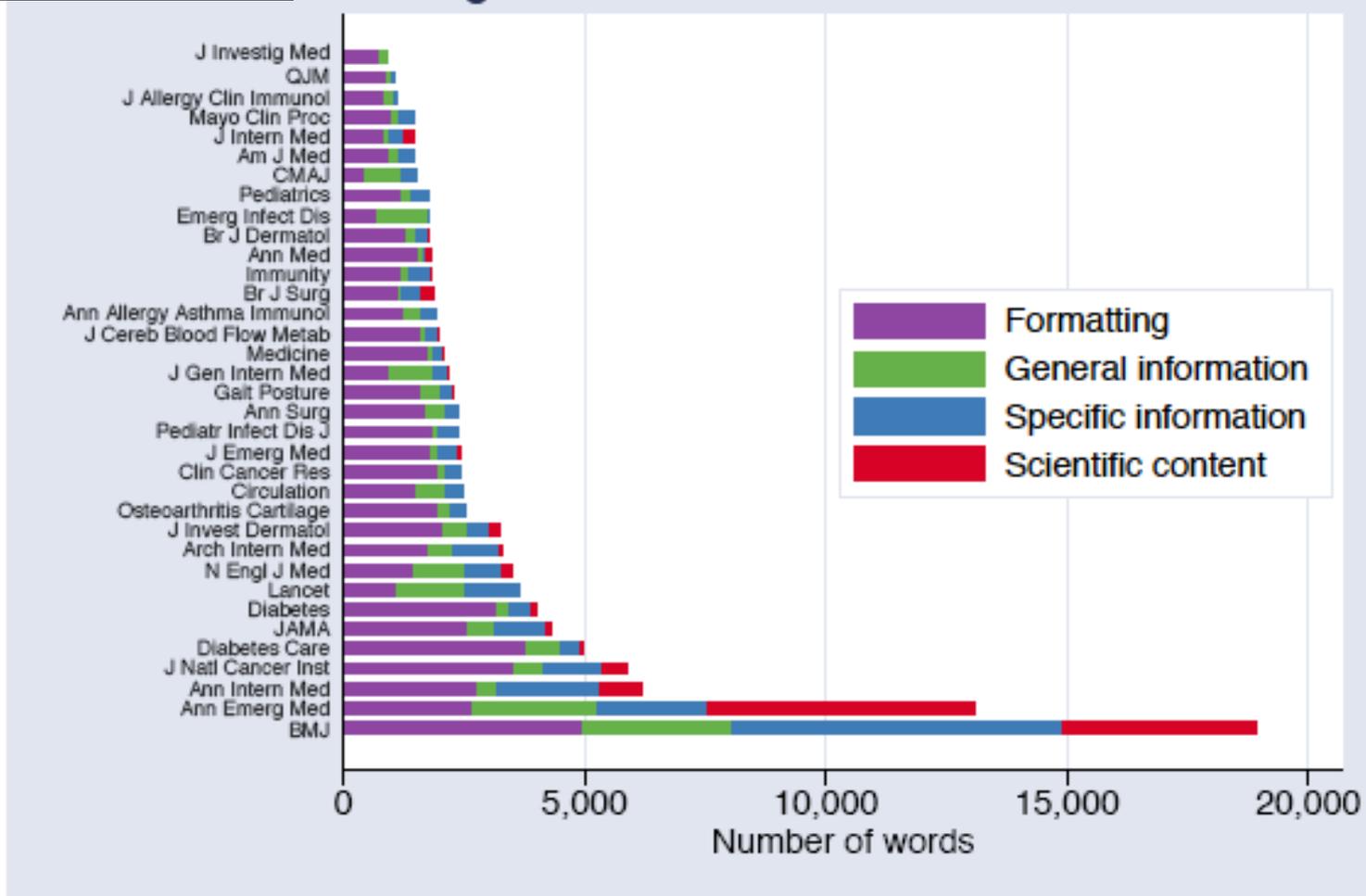
# Room for improvement

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- **Some journals / editors lead the way**  
(especially biomedical)
- **Others have little interest in/ knowledge of publication ethics**
- **Need to train editors**
- **Need to fund research, training and promotion**



## Length of Journals Instructions for Authors



**Figure 1.** The number of words devoted to the 4 major categories by each journal. Note how few words are devoted to scientific content. See Table 1 for details about the 18 subcategories.



# Challenges

- **Editors are busy people** (dual commitment)
- **Reviewers are over-stretched / volunteers** (can't ask them to do more)
- **Many initiatives cost time/money** (e.g. routine checking for image manipulation, plagiarism)
- **Publishers may not want to fund these**



**Journals may be reluctant to instigate investigations /  
publicize misconduct because of:**

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- **Resources involved (lack of time)**
- **Fear of litigation**
- **Lack of confidence / guidance**
- **Previous bad experience (e.g. nothing happened / took a lot of time)**



# Future vision



- **Cooperation** between editors' organizations across:
  - regions
  - disciplines
- Liaison between funders, regulators and editors – **uniform global standards**
- Funding for research, training and promotion

