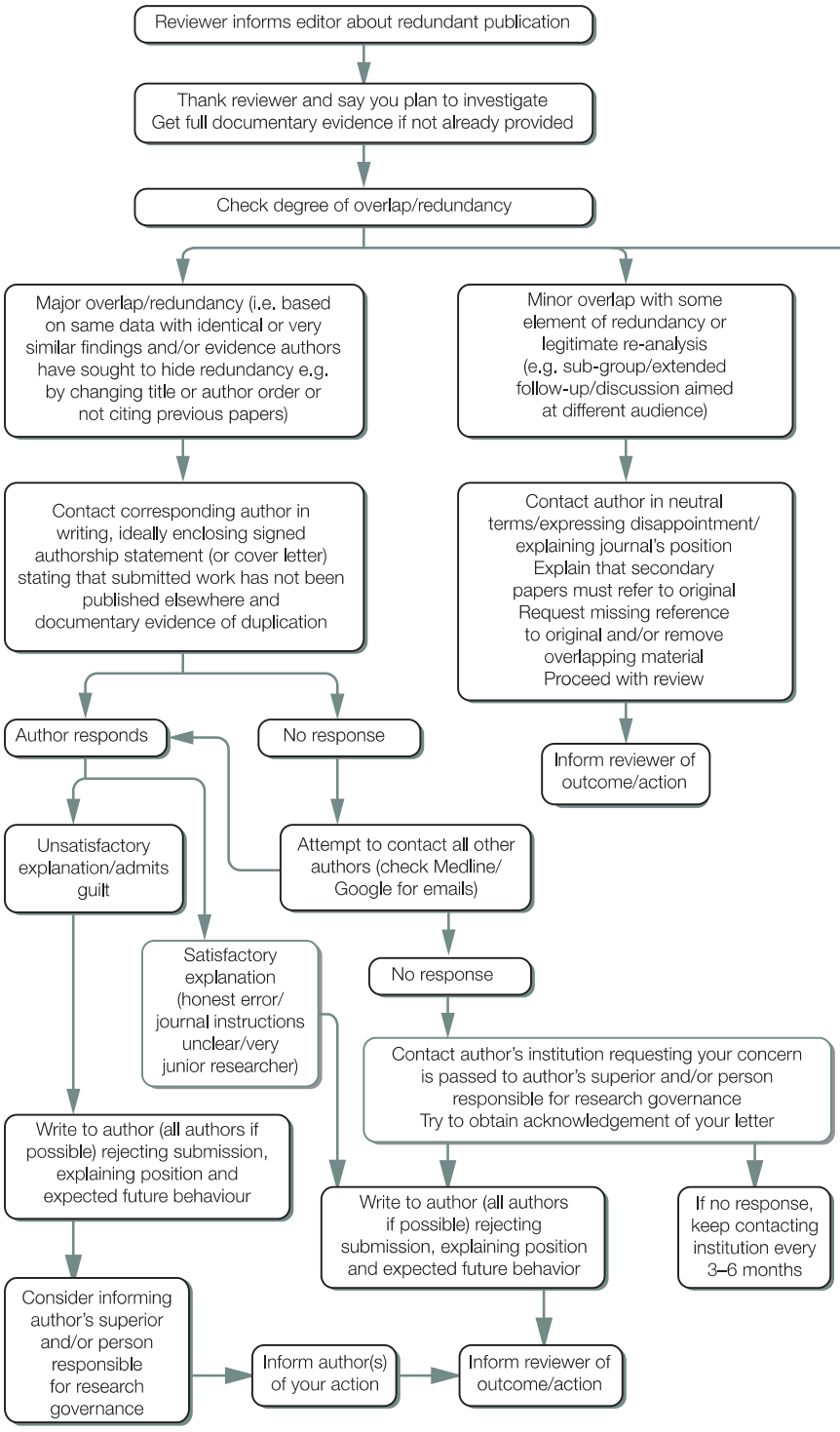
COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication
(a) Suspected redundant publication in a submitted manuscript



Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal's policy on redundant publication.

Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations.

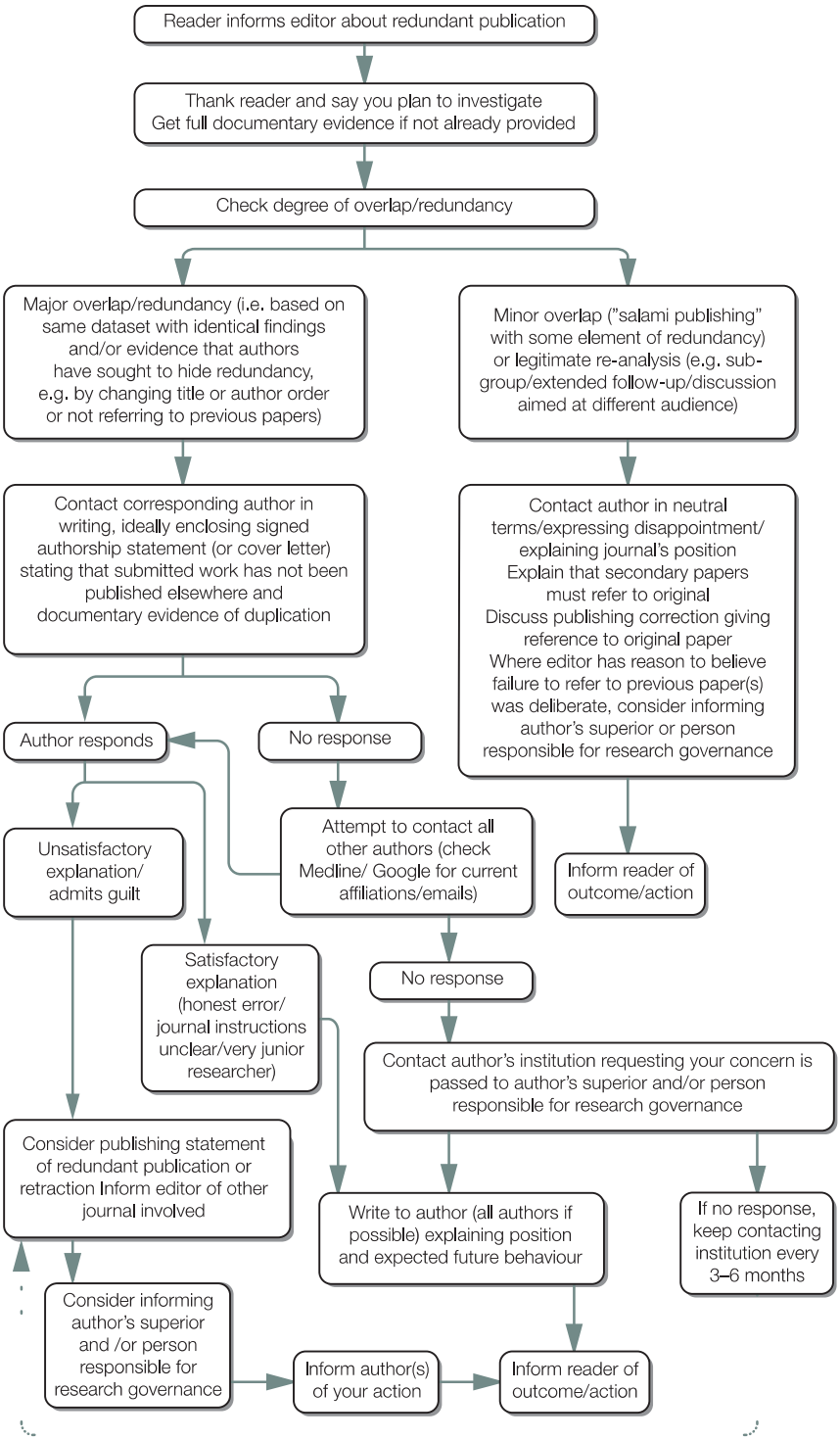
Note: ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original.

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication
(b) Suspected redundant publication in a published manuscript



Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal's policy on redundant publication.

Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations.

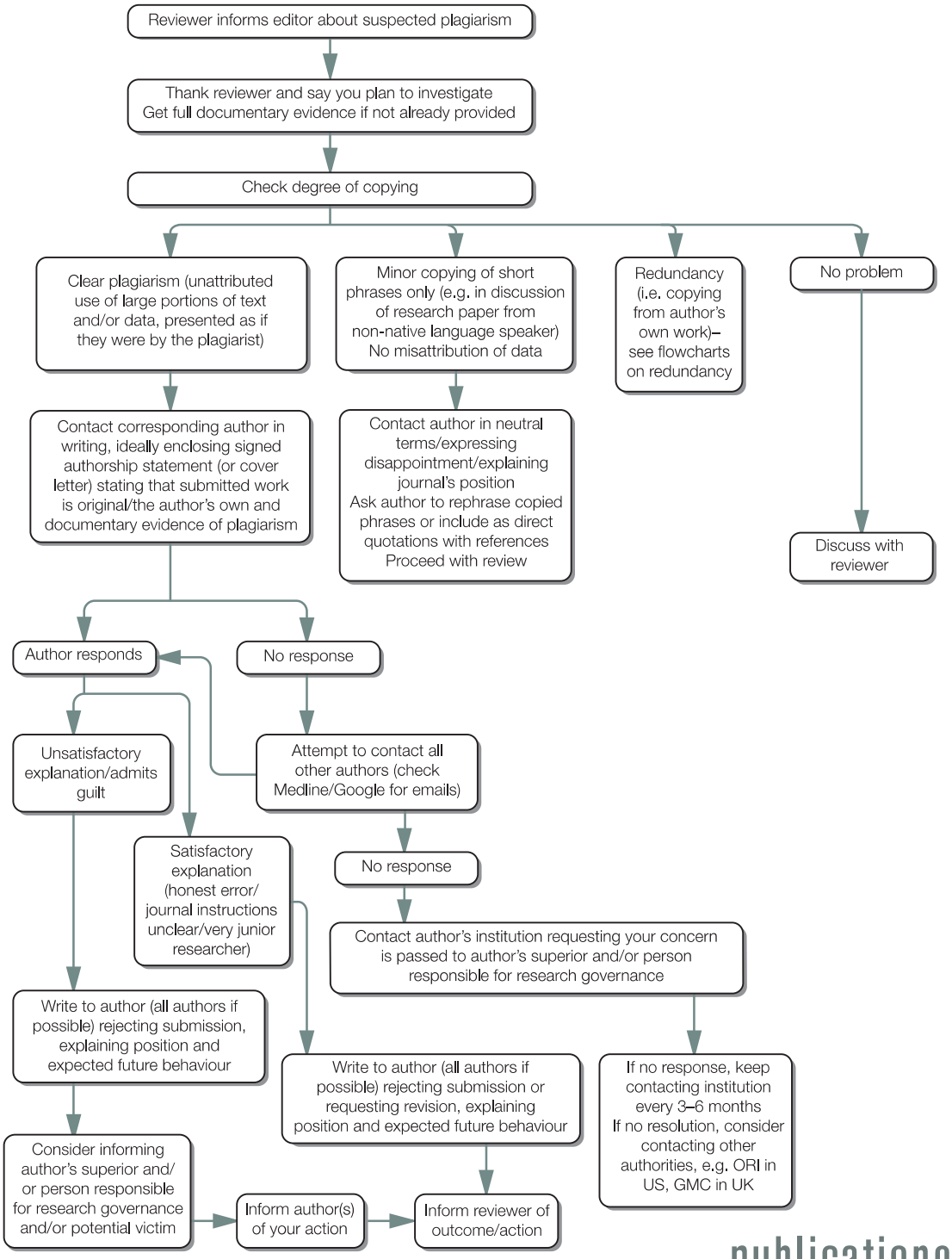
Note: ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original Editors may consider publishing a correction (i.e. the link to the original article) rather than a retraction/notice of duplicate publication in such cases

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect plagiarism
(a) Suspected plagiarism in a submitted manuscript



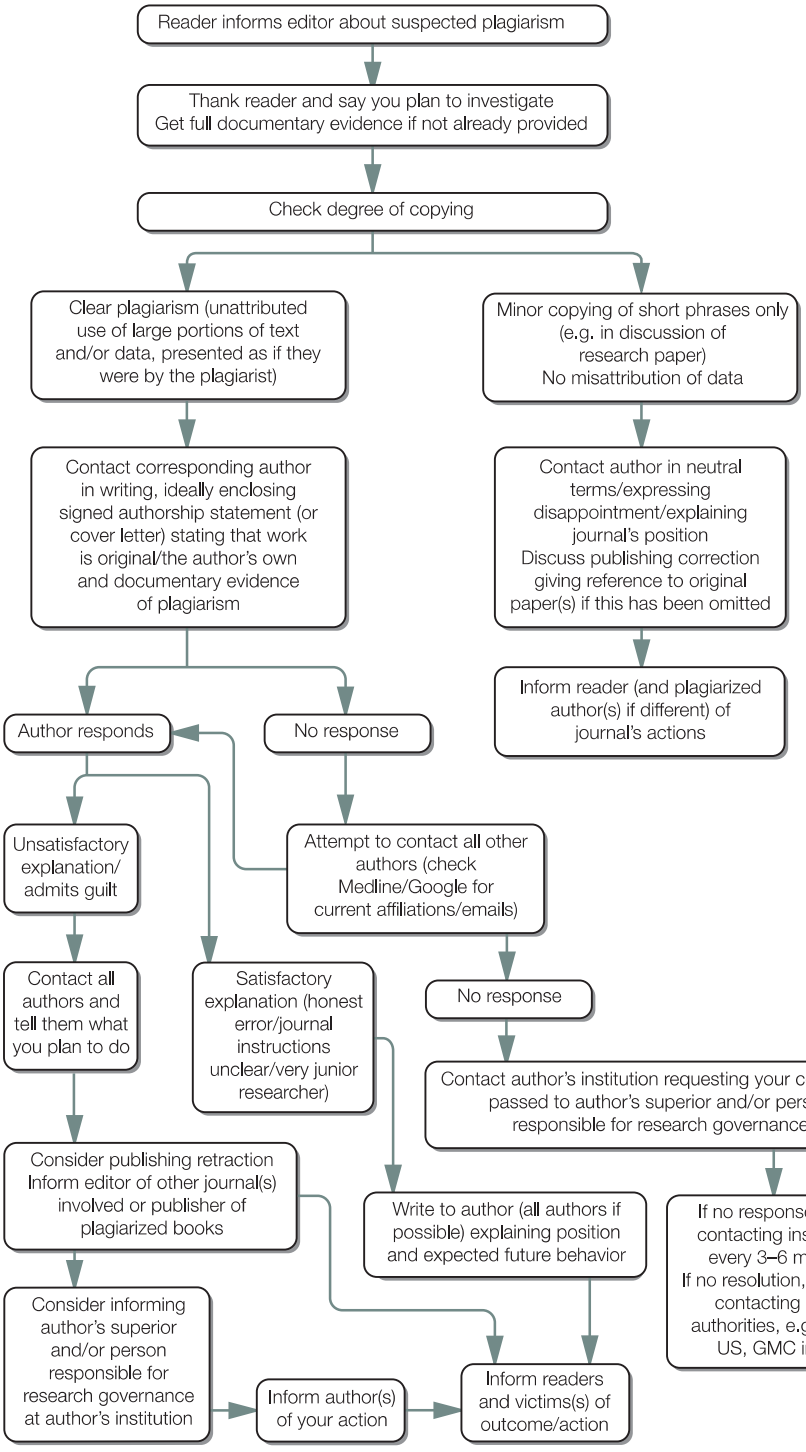
Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect plagiarism
(b) Suspected plagiarism in a published manuscript



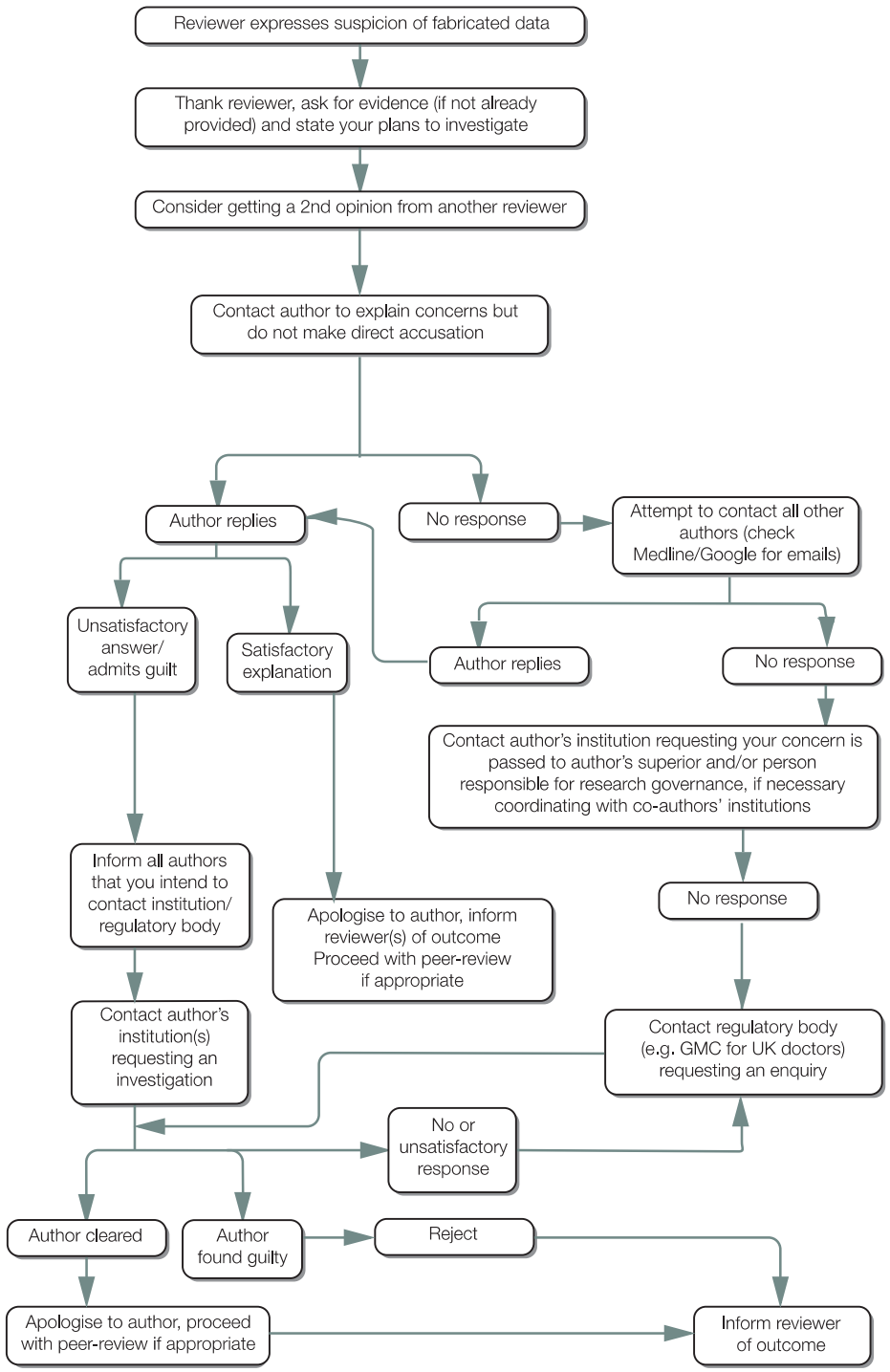
Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect fabricated data
(a) Suspected fabricated data in a submitted manuscript

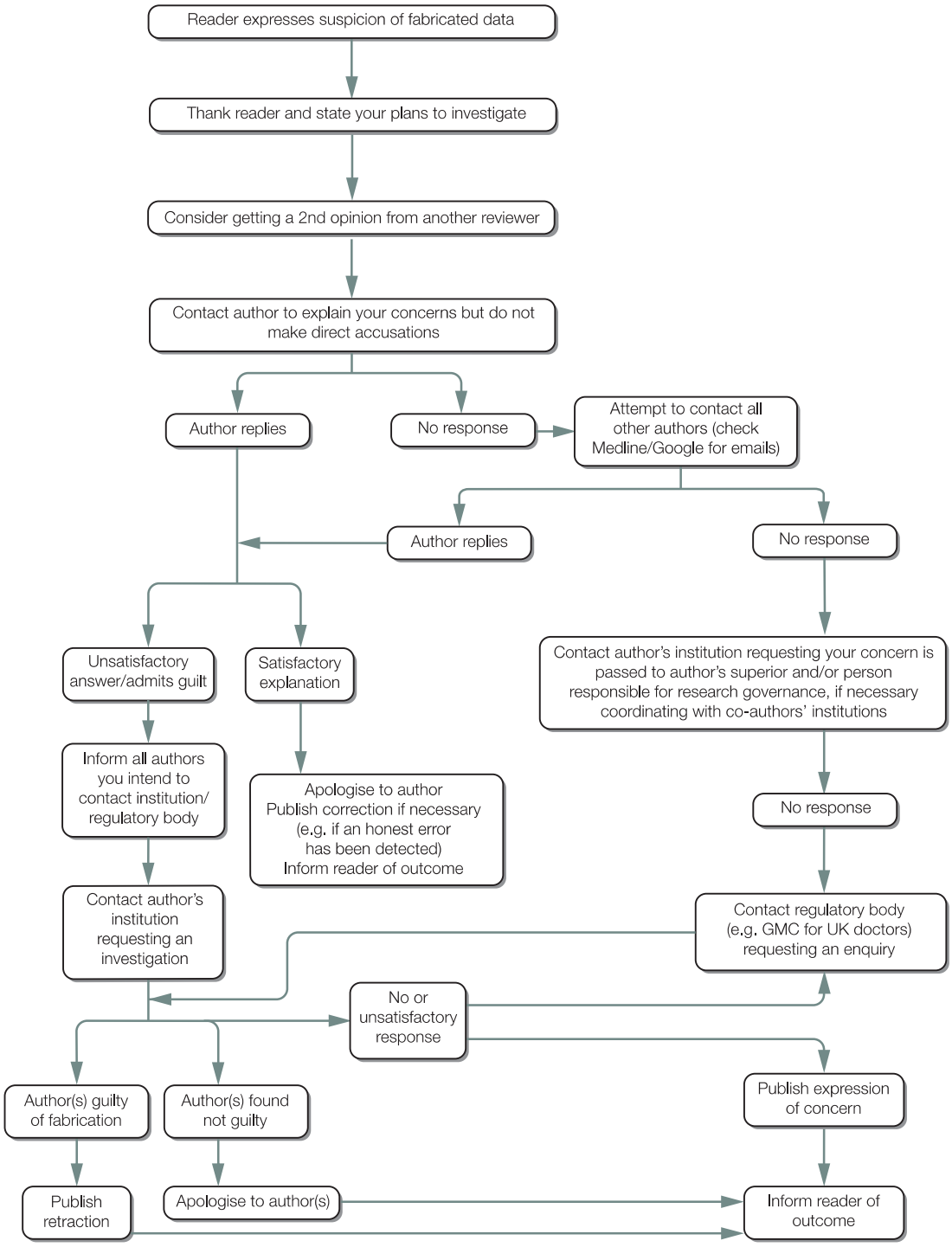


Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006
Revised May 2011

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect fabricated data
(b) Suspected fabricated data in a published manuscript



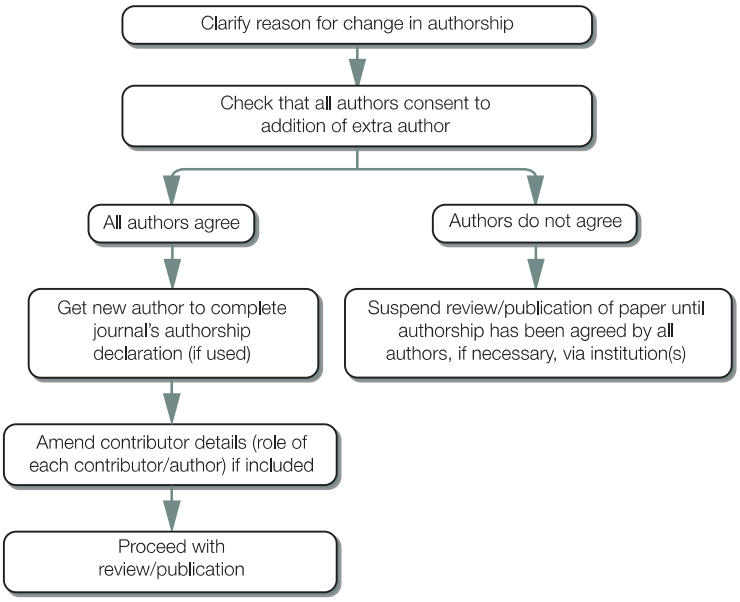
Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006
Revised May 2011

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Changes in authorship

(a) Corresponding author requests addition of extra author before publication



Note: Major changes in response to reviewer comments, e.g. adding new data might justify the inclusion of a new author

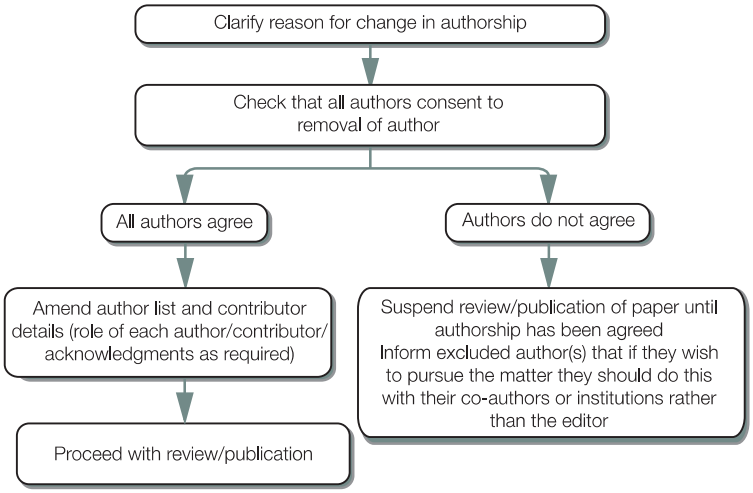
Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Changes in authorship

(b) Corresponding author requests removal of author before publication



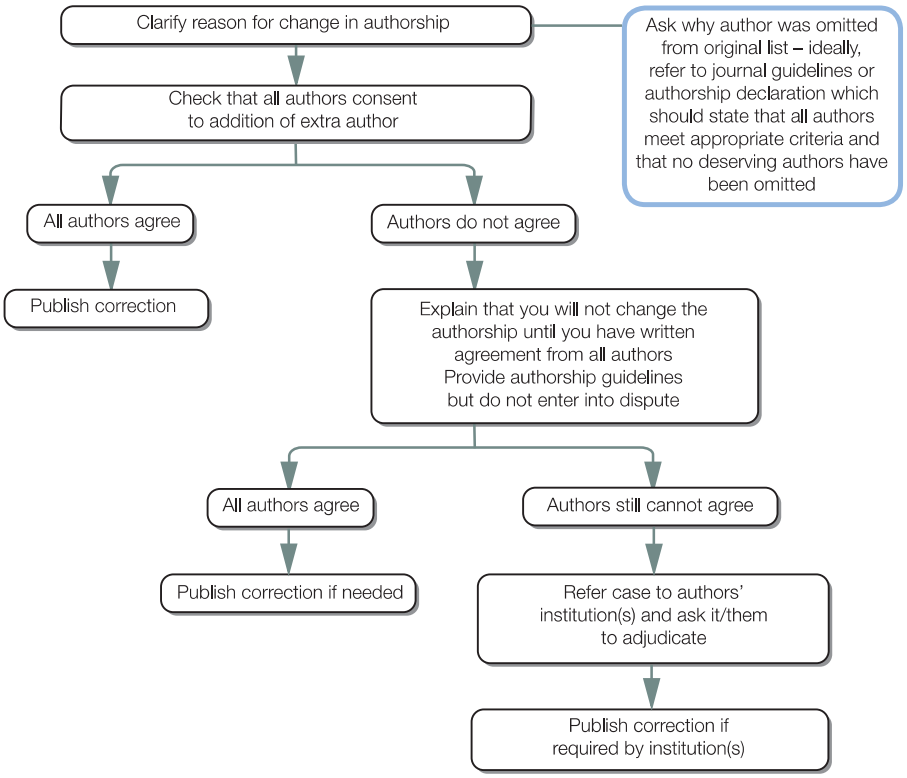
Note: Most important to check with the author(s) whose name(s) is/are being removed from the paper and get their agreement in writing

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Changes in authorship
(c) Request for addition of extra author after publication



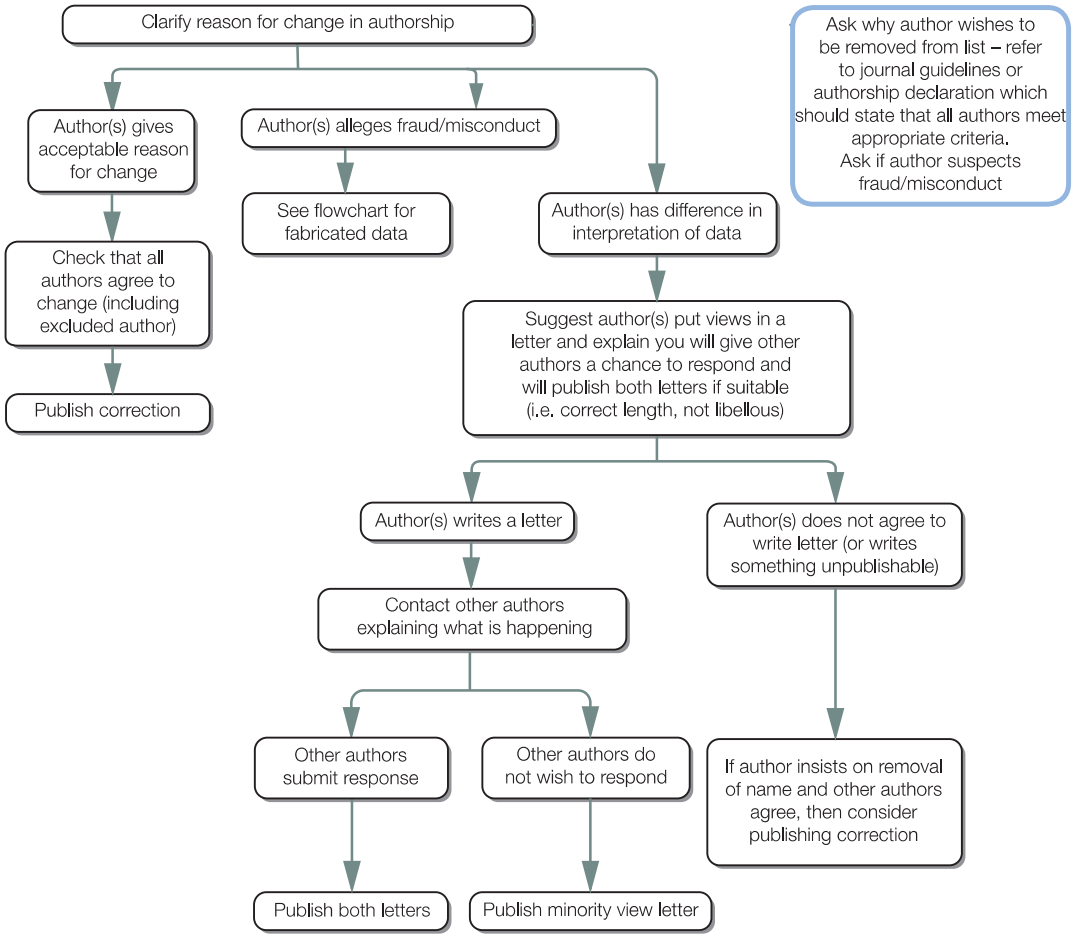
To prevent future problems:
(1) Before publication, get authors to sign statement that all listed authors meet authorship criteria and that no others meeting the criteria have been omitted
(2) Publish details of each person's contribution to the research and publication

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

Changes in authorship
(d) Request for removal of author after publication



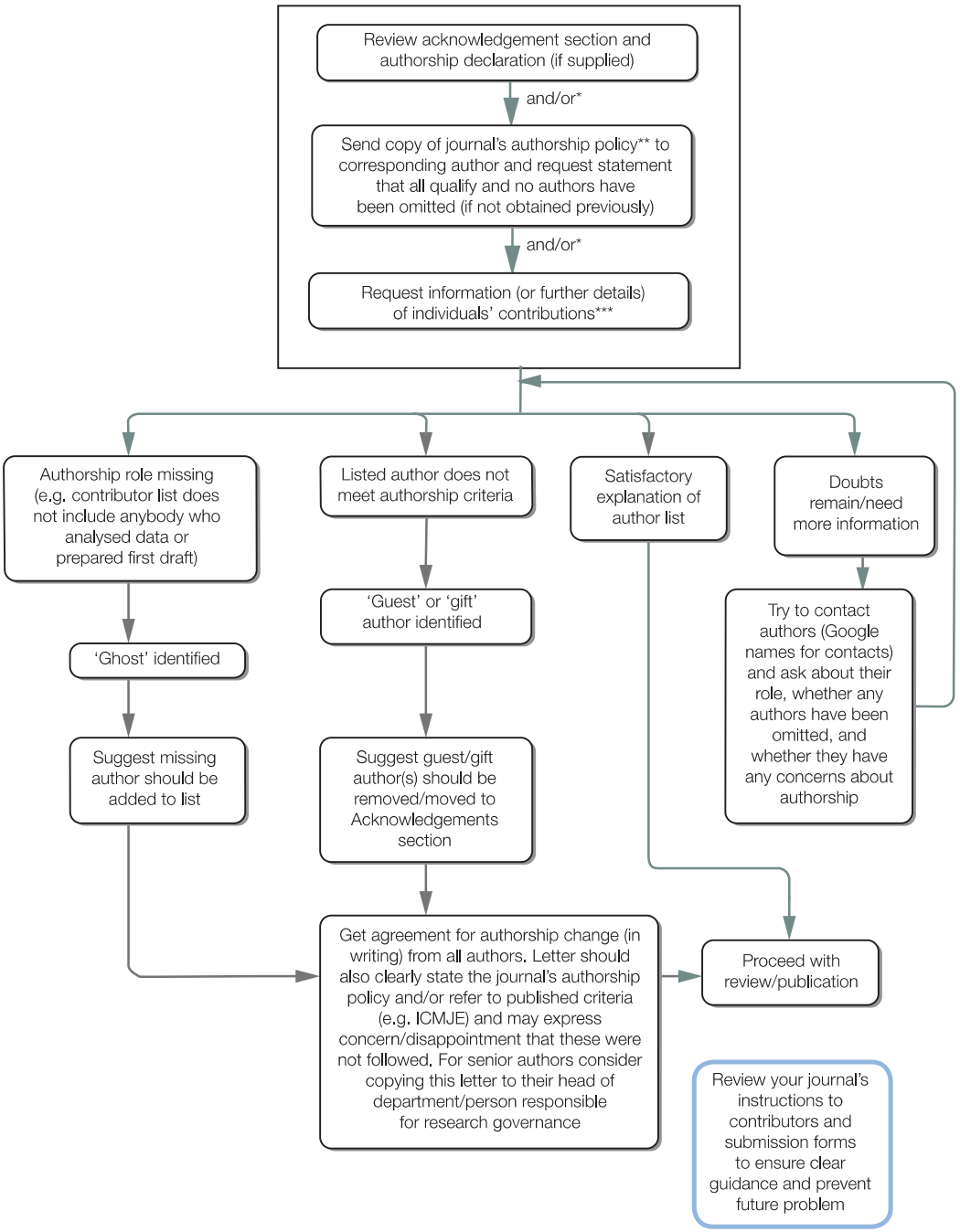
Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect ghost, guest or gift authorship

(see also flowcharts on Changes in authorship, as such requests may indicate the presence of a ghost or gift author)



*Note: initial action will depend on journal's normal method of collecting author/contributor info

**Note: including clear guidance/criteria for authorship in journal instructions makes it easier to handle such issues

***Note: Marusic et al. have shown that the method of collecting such data (e.g. free text or check boxes) can influence the response. Letting authors describe their own contributions probably results in the most truthful and informative answers.

Reference

Marusic A, Bates T, Anic A et al. How the structure of contribution disclosure statement affects validity of authorship: a randomised study in a general medical journal. Curr Med Res Opin 2006;22:1035–44

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)

© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics

First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

How to spot authorship problems

Editors cannot police author or contributor listing for every submission but may sometimes have suspicions that an author list is incomplete or includes undeserving (guest or gift) authors. The COPE flowchart on 'What to do if you suspect ghost, guest or gift authorship suggests actions for these situations. The following points are designed to help editors be alert for inappropriate authorship and spot warning signs which may indicate problems.

Type of authorship problems

A ghost author is someone who is omitted from an authorship list despite qualifying for authorship. This is not necessarily the same as a ghost writer, since omitted authors often perform other roles, in particular data analysis. (Gotzsche et al. have shown that statisticians involved with study design are frequently omitted from papers reporting industry-funded trials.) If a professional writer has been involved with a publication it will depend on the authorship criteria being used whether s/he fulfils the criteria to be listed as an author. Using the ICMJE criteria for research papers, medical writers usually do not qualify as authors, but their involvement and funding source should be acknowledged.

A guest or gift author is someone who is listed as an author despite not qualifying for authorship. Guests are generally people brought in to make the list look more impressive (despite having little or no involvement with the research or publication). Gift authorship often involves mutual CV enhancement (i.e. including colleagues on papers in return for being listed on theirs).

Signs that might indicate authorship problems

- Corresponding author seems unable to respond to reviewers' comments
- Changes are made by somebody not on the author list (check Word document properties to see who made the changes but bear in mind there may be an innocent explanation for this, e.g. using a shared computer, or a secretary making changes)
- Document properties show the manuscript was drafted by someone not on the author list or properly acknowledged (but see above)
- Impossibly prolific author e.g. of review articles/opinion pieces (check also for redundant/overlapping publication) (this may be detected by a Medline or Google search using the author's name)
- Several similar review articles/editorials/opinion pieces have been published under different author names (this may be detected by a Medline or Google search using the article title or key words)
- Role missing from list of contributors (e.g. it appears that none of the named authors were responsible for analysing the data or drafting the paper)
- Unfeasibly long or short author list (e.g. a simple case report with a dozen authors or a randomised trial with a single author)
- Industry-funded study with no authors from sponsor company (this may be legitimate, but may also mean deserving authors have been omitted; reviewing the protocol may help determine the role of employees - see Gotzsche et al. and commentary by Wager)

References

Gotzsche PC, Hrobjartsson A, Johansen HK, Haar MT, Altman DG et al. Ghost authorship in industry-initiated randomised trials. PLoS Med 2007; 4(1):e19. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.00440019

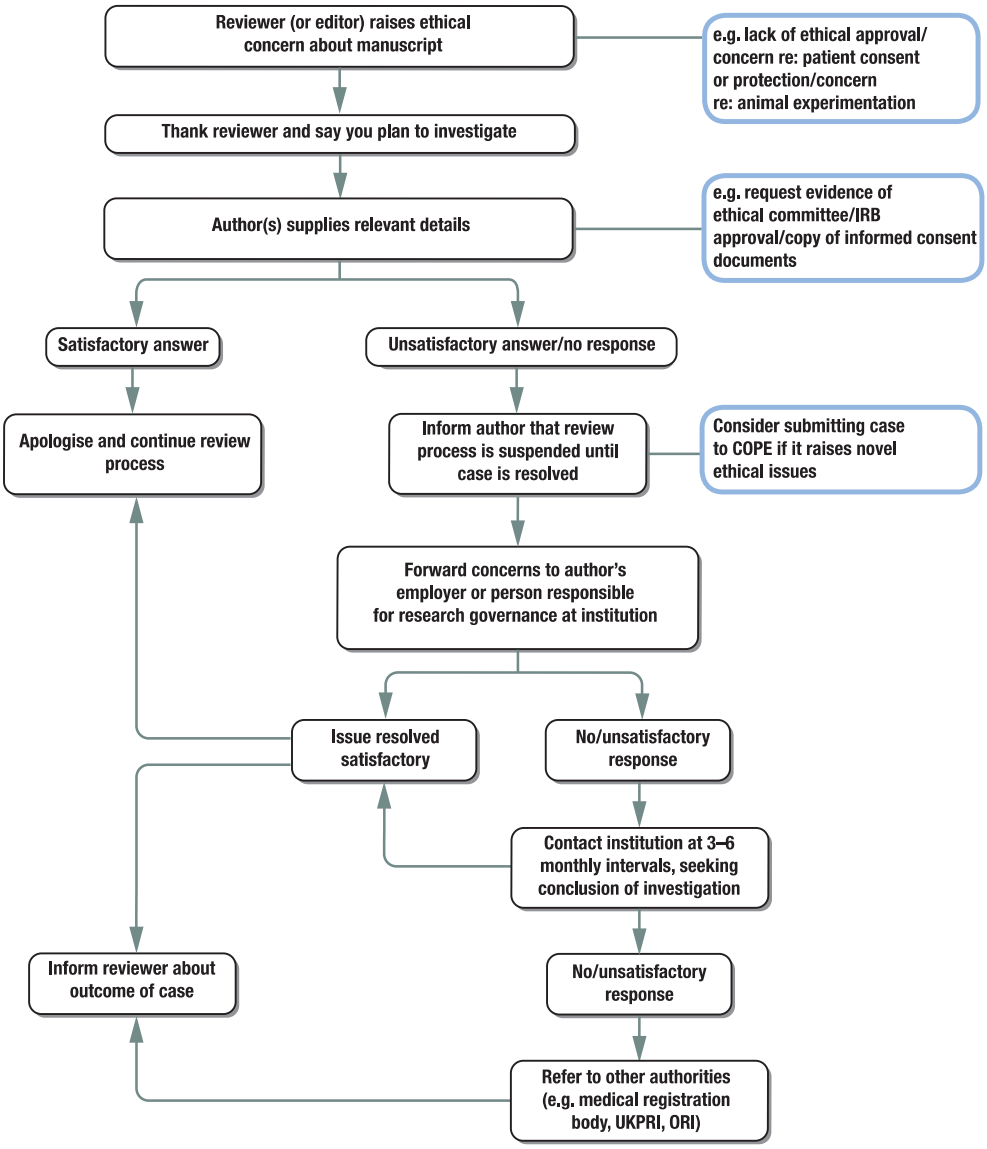
Wager E (2007) Authors, Ghosts, Damned Lies, and Statisticians. PLoS Med 2007;4(1):e34. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.0040034

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if a reviewer suspects undisclosed conflict of interest (CoI) in a submitted manuscript

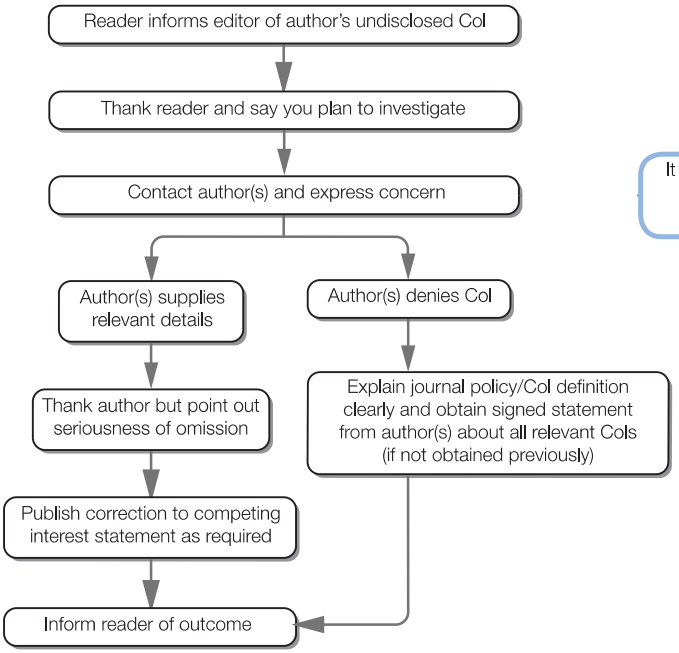


Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if a reader suspects undisclosed conflict of interest (CoI) in a published article



It may be helpful to provide a copy of the journal's policy/definition of CoI

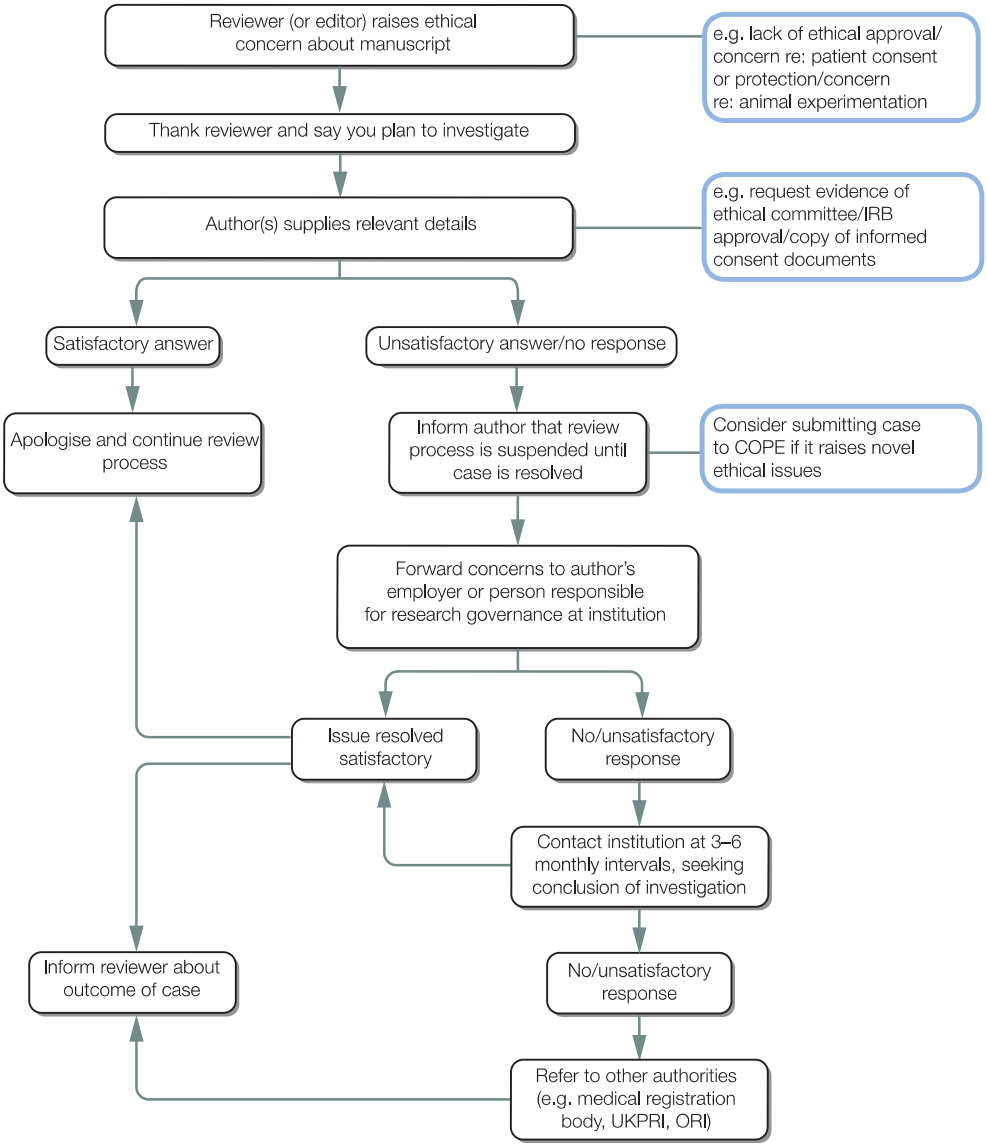
Note:
To avoid future problems:
Always get signed statement of CoIs from all authors and reviewers before publication.
Ensure journal guidelines include clear definition of CoI

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect an ethical problem with a submitted manuscript

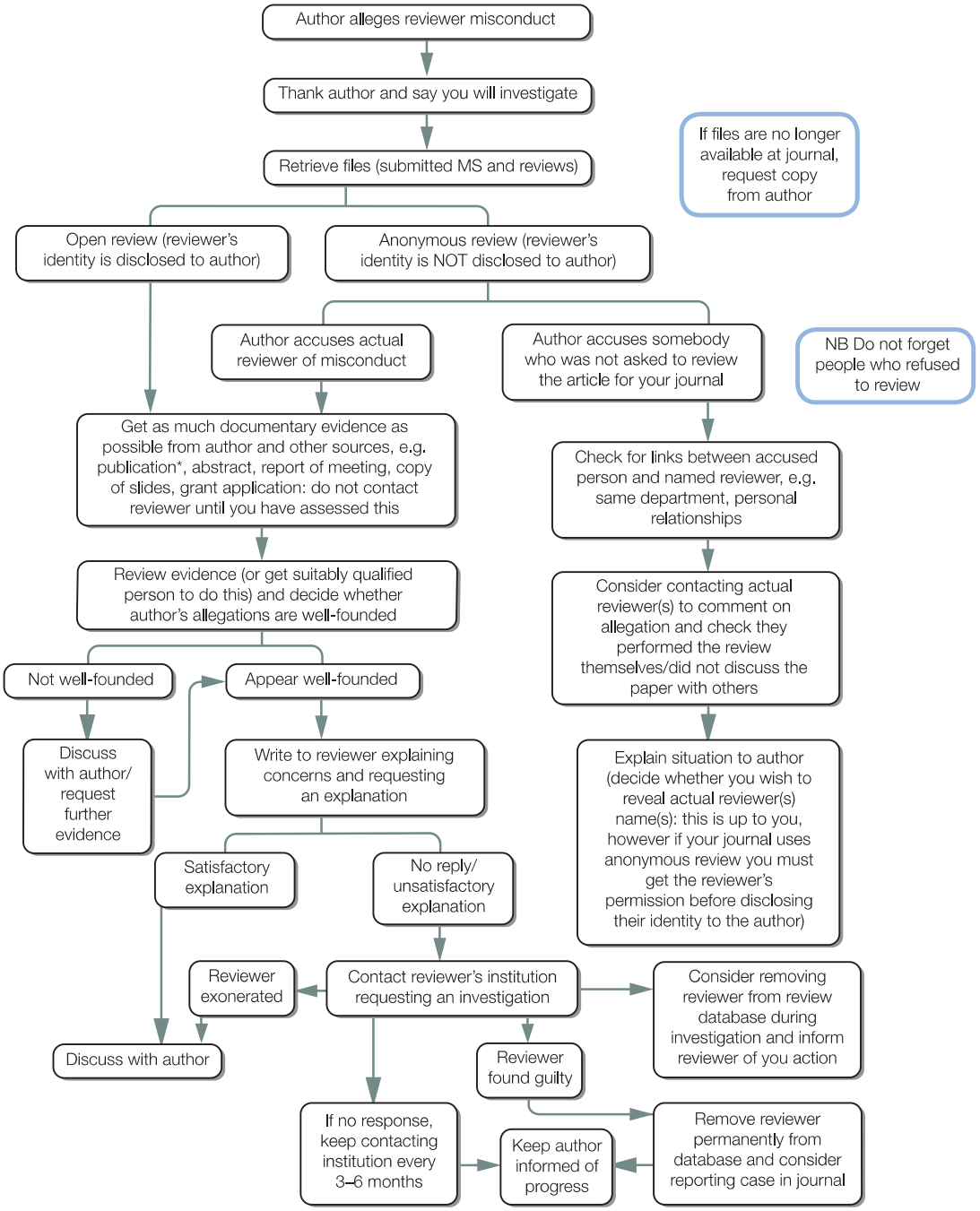


Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org

COPE COMMITTEE ON PUBLICATION ETHICS

What to do if you suspect a reviewer has appropriated an author's ideas or data



Note: The instruction to reviewers should state that submitted material must be treated in confidence and may not be used in any way until it has been published

Note: options depend on type of review system used

*Note: if author produces published paper this may be handled as plagiarism (see plagiarism flow chart)

Developed for COPE by Liz Wager of Sideview (www.lizwager.com)
© 2013 Committee on Publication Ethics
First published 2006

A non-exclusive licence to reproduce these flowcharts may be applied for by writing to: cope_administrator@publicationethics.org