

From: Iratxe Puebla <cope_assistant@publicationethics.org>
Date: Wednesday, August 26, 2020 at 2:56 AM
To: Britta Lassmann <britta.lassmann@isid.org>
Cc: Paul Tambyah <paul_anantharajah_tambyah@nuhs.edu.sg>, "c.fennell@elsevier.com" <c.fennell@elsevier.com>, "edwardsm@vt.edu" <edwardsm@vt.edu>, Eskild Petersen <eskild.petersen@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Concerns raised to the attention of COPE

Dear Dr Lassmann,

Thank you for your letter in relation to COPE's request for comments on Marc Edwards' concerns about the abstract in *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* by Maki and colleagues.

We would like to first of all clarify that in relation to the disclosure of Dr Edwards' identity to the authors of the abstract (concern 2 in your letter), we received clarification that Dr Edwards' identity was known to the authors prior to the editor's follow up and thus, we would like to confirm that we do not have concerns about the journal's handling of this item. We are sorry about any confusion in relation to this point.

We have reviewed your letter and remain concerned about the lack of specific follow up on the concerns raised about the content of the published abstract (concern 1 in the letter).

We understand that the journal has published two Letters to the Editor in response to the abstract, at the same time, it appears that lack of clarity remains about the time at which the infections took place relative to the water filter usage and the cause of death for the patients reported in the abstract. This is important information required for the interpretation of the results and conclusions, and we feel that the journal has a duty to pursue those clarifications with the authors, separate from the discussion that has taken place via the Letters to the Editor. We also feel that it is important for the journal to reassure itself about the ethical oversight and approval for the study. Given the public health implications of the findings reported, we feel that the journal has a duty to fully clarify these items in order to establish if the abstract can stand or any updates to the record are required.

We feel that the lack of comprehensive follow up on these aspects deviates from the expectations per the COPE Core Practices.

We would expect the journal to pursue further follow up with the authors to request clear and comprehensive information on the time at which the infections took place relative to the water filter usage and the cause of death for the patients. We would also expect the journal to request that the authors provide the documentation for the study protocol and ethical approval for the study. Upon receipt of the information, the editors should evaluate whether the conclusions of the abstract stand or whether any corrections to the record are needed.

We therefore request that the journal takes these additional steps with the authors to address the concerns raised about the abstract, and that the journal let us know what steps are planned, and when those have been implemented. **If the journal opts not to pursue such further follow up, we will consider that the process is not aligned to COPE's Core Practices and we will have to raise the case to the COPE Trustee Board for consideration under the COPE sanctions framework.**

We would be grateful if you could confirm by September 15 the steps the journal will take to address COPE's request.

We look forward to hearing from you.
With best wishes,

Iratxe Puebla
Facilitation and Integrity Officer
Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
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On behalf of
COPE Facilitation and Integrity subcommittee

On Fri, May 8, 2020 at 4:41 PM Britta Lassmann <britta.lassmann@isid.org> wrote:

Dear Ms. Puebla,

Thank you very much for the follow up. I am looking forward to hearing back from the COPE Facilitation and Integrity subcommittee with guidance to resolve Dr. Edward's remaining concerns.

With best wishes,

Britta

Britta Lassmann, MD

Program Director

International Society for Infectious Diseases

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