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Ensuring the Integrity of the Published Record: *Croatian Medical Journal* Endorses Guidance on Retractions in Scientific Journals by Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)

As a member of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the *Croatian Medical Journal (CMJ)* endorses COPE guidance on retractions (1), which has been an important editorial tool for ensuring the integrity of the published record in their journals. The *CMJ* editors have used article retraction as a way to protect the journal's integrity, and welcomed the help from experts from the COPE and the World Association of Medical Editors (2). Our experience has shown that guidelines and best practices for editors could serve as tools for editorial work and protection for editorial independence, especially for editors of small, scholarly journals, whose editorial posts are usually based on good will, enthusiasm, and limited professional skills in publishing (3). The awareness of the importance of editorial independence is growing among editors of scholarly journals, as can be seen from several recent examples. For example, the European National Society Cardiovascular Journals published a statement asking the editors and their national societies to "jealously safeguard the editorial independence of their respective national journals" (3). Independence is a great privilege for editors, but it also brings responsibility and occasionally even some unpleasant tasks, such as handling allegations about submitted or published articles and making decision on the correction of the published record (4,5).

The growing importance of literature corrections and retractions in scientific publishing is visible from the fact that PubMed/Medline has a separate designation for retracted publications, which are collected in one of PubMed's Special Queries at http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/special_queries.html. The first retraction/correction was published in 1973, but the number of similar retractions is steadily increasing, both in absolute and relative terms (6), and currently amounts to a total of 1322 retractions or corrections.

Ana Marušić

ana.marusic@cmj.hr

Ivan Damjanov

IDAMJANO@kumc.edu

COPE guidance on retraction was released on December 1, 2009 and it is available at COPE Web site. We have nevertheless decided to publish these guidelines in full to emphasize the importance of the trust in research published in scientific journals. Ensuring the trust in published research record is not a job for editors only, but for all stakeholders in research, from the researchers themselves to the public that depends on the integrity and validity of the research results.

References

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