

"This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: [International Journal of Nursing Practice, 2017, 23 (4), pp. ? - ? (2)], which has been published in final form at [http://doi.org/10.1111/ijn.12579]. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with [Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving](#)."

Publication ethics – where are we today?

Part 2: Authorship: What constitutes prior publication?

In Part 1 of this series (Perry 2017) I raised the problem of prior publication: authors *'recycling material that they have already published elsewhere. What constitutes prior publication can be one issue—in an age where a lot of material previously not freely or electronically available has become so—such as conference abstracts and theses. New forms have also arisen, including individual websites, blogs, vlogs, and self-publication. There is no standard for what comprises prior publication; COPE recommends that the author consult the editor before/at submission of any manuscript where content may already be in the public domain'* (COPE 2017).

Journal space is limited and publication processes entail cost. Difficult choices are required, and there may be less value in publishing papers that have already reached their target audiences.

COPE (the Committee On Publication Ethics) is not alone in referring authors to the editor – just about every other journal says the same. COPE has resources on text recycling and redundant publication (COPE 2017) but neither COPE nor INANE (the International Academy of Nursing Editors) offer specific guidance for the poor editor on what may/ may not constitute acceptable prior or secondary publication. However, the topic is discussed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE 2017) and in a 2017 consensus statement developed by a group of health journal editors, published on the Health Policy and Planning website. Proposed guidance with respect to prior publication revolves around two rules:

1. If the material in a paper has already been disseminated to a journal's audience, particularly in a format that appears to be a finished product, then it is unlikely to be worth further publication.
2. Authors are responsible to inform editors at the time of submission where a paper's contents have been previously disseminated in any way so that the editors can determine whether to proceed.

These editors discuss various forms of potential prior publication:

Presentations at conferences and meetings - Not usually seen as jeopardizing future publication.

Working Papers – Those released by an author rather than a publisher, circulated to a limited audience, not publically advertised and marked as draft are not usually seen as jeopardizing future publication.

Internet Posting - May potentially jeopardize journal publication, depending on the intention and methods used. If presented as a final report and posted with the intention of reaching a wide audience (for example, using strategies to direct traffic (such as links from other websites) and attract attention, such as press releases), this may well deter an editor from giving it further space. However, if a document is posted to facilitate communication and feedback amongst peers without seeking wider attention, this is less likely to deter journal publication. When the website posting functions like a conventional publication (perhaps labelled with a DOI or even copyrighted by the posting organization), there may be little benefit for a journal by further publication.

A paper published on a website may avoid being considered a prior publication if it includes a disclosure statement such as: "This draft paper is intended for review and comments only. It is not intended for citation, quotation, or other use in any form." Any such statement should remain in

place until the paper is accepted for journal publication, when it should be replaced by a statement such as: "A revised final version of this paper will appear in (Journal Name), volume, issue." Statements should appear in a header or footer on every page.

Posting trial results in a trial registry – Acceptable as long as results are limited to a brief (500 word) structured abstract or tables (of patients enrolled, key outcomes/ adverse events). The registration should indicate that results have not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal, and should be updated with the journal citation when this occurs.

Joint publications - Editors of different journals may simultaneously or jointly publish an article if they believe that doing so would be in the public best interest. Common examples include consensus statements on reporting frameworks such as CONSORT and PRISMA etc. These are nonetheless indexed in databases separately, so need to include a statement about the simultaneous publication.

Formal reports issued by formal organisations, funders, trade associations, governmental or non-governmental bodies - Dissemination efforts from organisations that support or carry out research can complement journal publication. Ideally, publications should be simultaneous or organisational papers should follow journal publication (with appropriate copyright permissions), allowing peer review to flag any shortcomings. Formal, published reports that have gone through an editorial process, are intended for a wide audience, and are publicized and widely available are usually considered prior publication. A paper based on the report might be considered as long as it was sufficiently different, representing a distinct and important contribution beyond the report.

Policy briefs – Research presented within a briefing may be considered for publication if (i) the brief has not had wide circulation outside the country and (ii) is clearly targeted at policy-makers (does not include the detailed methods and findings of a journal article).

Public health emergency - Information with immediate relevance for public health should be disseminated without concern whether this will jeopardise future journal publication.

Media Publicity - If research results become widely known as a result of media exposure (or if there is potential for this), and the research report is readily available (for example, on a website), further publication may not be warranted. Unwanted media attention can be avoided by clearly marking work as draft, where conclusions remain subject to change. Any accepted manuscript released to the media should contain the statement: "A revised final version of this paper will appear in (Journal Name), volume, issue." Journal policies involving author contact with members of the media vary, and authors should check with the editor before speaking with or distributing papers to the media.

Secondary publication for other reasons - These may be justifiable providing:

1. The editors of both journals approve this and the editor of secondary publication has access to the primary version.
2. The priority of the primary publication is respected with a publication interval negotiated by both editors and authors.
3. The secondary publication targets a different readership.
4. The secondary version is an accurate reflection of the data and interpretations of the original.

5. The secondary version informs, cites and refers readers to the primary publication.
6. The title of the secondary publication indicates the secondary publication status.

Disclosure

COPE, the ICMJE and the consensus statement editors concur that prior to or at submission of a paper that has already been disseminated in any way, authors should explain this to the editor so that a decision can be made before peer review. Authors should describe in detail how the work has been disseminated and any differences between the submitted and prior publications. The editor must be advised of any dissemination that will or may happen prior to publication, rather than this being discovered later. Authors should submit with their manuscript any papers that might be considered to cover the same material. Failure to disclose could preclude publication in the journal or result in retraction of a published article.

Whilst it is not possible to set out guidance that covers every situation, the above makes it clear that further publication will be unlikely in some commonly encountered situations. These include where a conference paper (more than a brief abstract) is published in a journal supplement, or where work is detailed in an online publication. Authors should adhere to the following:

- Where there has been ANY prior publication of the submitted material, state this in the letter to the editor that accompanies submission, citing/ supplying the webpage for the publication.
- If in doubt, contact the editor prior to submission and ask for an opinion.

This editorial has been agreed with the *International Journal of Nursing Practice* Editorial Board.

Professor Lin Perry

Editor in Chief, *International Journal of Nursing Practice*

REFERENCES

Committee On Publication Ethics. 2017. At <https://publicationethics.org/resources>

Consensus statement 2017. *Prior publication policy*. London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and Oxford University Press. At https://academic.oup.com/heapol/pages/Prior_Publication

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. 2017. *Overlapping publications*. At <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/publishing-and-editorial-issues/overlapping-publications.html>

Perry L. (2017) Publication ethics – where are we today? Part 1: Authorship: Attribution Without Hesitation, Deviation or Repetition. *International Journal of Nursing Practice* 2017;23:e12538. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijn.12538>