

SAFEGUARDING THE SCIENTIFIC RECORD: TAKING ACTION AFTER A RESEARCH INTEGRITY INVESTIGATION

Transcript

Actions taken after investigations are always considered carefully. Once we've heard back from the authors on an investigation and we put all our findings and the information from authors together as a summary for the Editor-in-Chief. The editor then has to decide what's the appropriate action. And then the Editor-in-Chief, or an editor of the volume, or of a book series, the person with editorial responsibility for this publication, they decide whether they want to follow our recommendation, or they would like to not follow it.

Most of the time they do follow it. The research integrity group is advisory. So we do the investigations, and we follow the guidelines of the Committee on Publication Ethics. But we are advisory, so ultimately we recommend a certain type of editorial action, but ultimately it's the editor. And that makes a lot of sense.

We highly value editorial independence, but also our editors are the people who know the research that's being discussed in the paper, And once we've got the editorial decision, then again, we will communicate that with authors so they know where they stand, and then follow the action that the editor decided to go with.

These actions are generally: taking no action if it's concluded that none is warranted, publishing an expression of concern to raise awareness of potential issues in cases where it is not possible to reach a clear conclusion regarding said issues, issuing a correction in cases where the conclusions of the article stand, but there are errors in the article that needs to be addressed, retracting an article if the conclusions can no longer be relied upon.

And a retraction is, not an easy decision to make. But it is an important decision to make as a neutral mechanism to correct the literature. The papers do not disappear. The papers do get watermarked and the retraction note is published for everybody to see. Anytime we see a retraction, it's important that you don't automatically assume that something bad happened or someone did something really bad in the research or publication process.

The role of a retraction is to correct scientific record, and by no means is it a way of punishing authors. In fact, we really invite authors to come to us whenever they find a problem with their own article so we can work together to retract it, as soon as possible, and then they can move on and publish the correct version.

Sometimes a retraction can be seen as something shameful by authors, but really, the whole point is to make sure that the scientific record is correct. Science cannot function without the public trust in it. And research integrity is paramount for the public's trust in science, because we ensure that the public doesn't spend resources there's no government money, there's no university money, there's no sponsorship money that is spent on research that is not based on verifiable, credible, previous research.

Our team is dedicated to protecting the published record, to ensure that these foundations for future research can be relied upon and can provide solutions to global challenges.