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19 May 2016

Dear Professors Armitage, Baigent and Collins

Thank you for your recent letter with regards to your complaint against the BMJ.

Unfortunately, COPE does not currently have an Ombudsperson. Our previous Ombudsperson recently stepped down and we are actively in the process of trying to find someone to take this on but it is proving difficult. As we do not expect an Ombudsperson to be appointed in the near future, we are proposing that we take this to our Trustee Board for review (<http://publicationethics.org/about/trustees>). Any competing interests will be stated and become part of the record, and any decision made by the Trustees will be COPE's final response. Our next Trustee Board meeting is on the 17 June.

We would also like to reiterate that COPE is not a statutory body nor do we have regulatory powers. COPE's aims are the education of its members and the promotion of a better understanding of publication ethics overall. We do not intervene in editorial decisions nor can we investigate the underlying issues of a complaint as we have neither the resources nor, more importantly, the appropriate level of expertise to accommodate this activity.

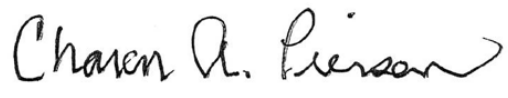
Yours sincerely



Chris Graf, co-Vice-chair



Geri Pearson, co-Vice-chair



Charon Pierson, COPE Secretary