

31 May 2016

Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)
22 Nelson Close
Harleston
Norfolk
IP20 9HL

Dear Mr Graf, Ms Pearson and Ms Pierson

Thank you for your letter of 19 May 2016.

We request that COPE does now conduct a properly independent assessment of each of the specific issues raised in our original submission of October 2014 (which includes links to supporting evidence that has not been properly considered by COPE), and reiterated in our letter of June 2015, related to the adverse impact on public health of the confusion about the safety of statin therapy following the BMJ's misrepresentation of the evidence (which is being exacerbated by repetition of the misleading claims in the media by the BMJ papers' authors: see, for example, our 1 March 2016 email to COPE).

In such circumstances, COPE should be concerned with protecting the public's health rather than with any narrower interests. It should act responsibly by addressing the substantive issues that have been raised about the way in which doctors, patients and the wider public have been misled about the safety of statin therapy by the BMJ's failure to correct the scientific record. In particular, COPE's views have been sought on whether its Code of Conduct for Journal Editors has been contravened in a number of ways by the BMJ and, if so, what steps COPE will take to rectify the situation.

In our view, COPE should advise the BMJ to retract the misleading papers that it published in October 2013 (applying sanctions, if required, in accordance with COPE's regulations) so that claims contained in those papers are publicly discredited, and further harm to patients and the public is reduced.

Given the increasing evidence of an adverse impact of the misleading claims that were published by the BMJ during the 18 month period since these concerns were originally drawn to the attention of COPE, we are now putting the submitted material into the public domain. We reserve the right to seek the advice of COPE's Ombudsman (whenever they are appointed), in accordance with your statutory procedures, if COPE does not conduct a thorough investigation of all of these issues.

Yours sincerely



Jane Armitage



Colin Baigent



Rory Collins