

NOTEWORTHY, PHILOSOPHY

UNKNOWS FACTS ABOUT COPE

12.11.2025

[Wilmhurst](#) about [COPE](#) then

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) was formed “to address breaches of research and publication ethics”. It was a discussion forum providing advice for editors. Its aims were to find practical ways of dealing with issues of concern and to develop good practice. At that time, the members consisted of a small number of editors of medical journals in the BMJ publishing group and the Lancet. There were two individuals who were not journal editors – Professor Ian Kennedy (subsequently Sir Ian Kennedy) and me.

and now

The majority of COPE’s income is from large publishing houses that obtain COPE membership for their entire portfolio of journals. Because some publishers have enrolled more than one thousand journals and Springer Nature has enrolled more than 3000 journals, there should be a question as to whether all the editors of the journals that are members of COPE are truly signed up to adhere to COPE principles and practices, rather than passively complying with the policy of their publishers. This arrangement also means that COPE does not know precisely how many members it has because publishing houses do not keep COPE informed about the number of journals in their stable. Individual journals can enrol for a small fee. COPE makes a selling point of the fact that COPE membership enables journals to use the COPE logo.

