

More Publications Retracted Due to Suspected Fraud re: Peer-reviewed Medical and Scientific Articles

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The string of retractions of published peer-reviewed medical and scientific articles due concerns about fraud or suspected fraud continues. This week a major publisher of scientific and medical articles has confirmed that it is retracting 64 articles from 10 of its subscription journals based on concerns that the peer review process was “compromised.”

The publisher, **Springer**, issued this statement:

London | Heidelberg, 18 August 2015

Springer confirms that 64 articles are being retracted from 10 Springer subscription journals, after editorial checks spotted fake email addresses, and subsequent internal investigations uncovered fabricated peer review reports. After a thorough investigation we have strong reason to believe that the peer review process on these 64 articles was compromised. We reported this to the Committee on Publishing Ethics (COPE) immediately. Attempts to manipulate peer review have affected journals across a number of publishers as detailed by COPE in their December 2014 statement. Springer has made COPE aware of the findings of its own internal investigations and has followed COPE’s recommendations, as outlined in their statement, for dealing with this issue. Springer will continue to participate and do whatever we can to support COPE’s efforts in this matter.

The peer-review process is one of the cornerstones of quality, integrity and reproducibility in research, and we take our responsibilities as its guardians seriously. We are now reviewing our editorial processes across Springer to guard against this kind of manipulation of the peer review process in future.

In all of this, our primary concern is for the research community. A research paper is the result of funding investment, institutional commitment and months of work by the authors, and publishing outputs affect careers, funding applications and institutional reputations.

We have been in contact with the corresponding authors and institutions concerned, and will continue to work with them.

A link to the statement can be found [here](#). The retraction story was covered in [The Washington Post](#) and [Retraction Watch](#). This most recent retraction of 64 articles by Springer follows [SAGE Publishers retraction](#) of 60 articles implicated in “a peer review ring involving assumed and fabricated identities” last year.

“[t]he number of papers retracted by all publishers for fake peer reviews since 2012 is now approximately 250, with another 32 flagged for peer review fraud . . . but not yet retracted.”

As discussed previously on this blog, [here](#) and [here](#), there is a marked increase in the number of scientific and medical articles being retracted because of fraud, or suspected fraud. According to Retraction Watch, “[t]he number of papers retracted by all publishers for fake peer reviews since 2012 is now approximately 250, with another 32 flagged for peer review fraud . . . but not yet retracted.” Retraction Watch estimates that approximately 1,500 papers have been retracted overall since 2012.

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