

Should journal editors be held responsible for fake peer reviews?

Czy redaktorzy czasopism powinni ponosić odpowiedzialność za fałszywe recenzje?

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Fake peer review is becoming a novel and fashionable nomenclature in the field of publication ethics [1, 2]. It refers to an unethical behaviour that the submitters fabricate the recommended peer reviewers' emails, and then review their own manuscripts. Such misbehaviour has been frequently observed in China; consequently, this country's medical research integrity is questioned [3]. Beyond all doubt, the author/submitters should be severely punished. However, as we rethink it deeply, two prerequisites for this misbehaviour should be acknowledged: 1) the submitters are required to recommend the potential peer reviewers in the submission system; and 2) the journal editors agree with the submitters' proposals. Notably, before external reviews, the journal editors have the opportunity to check the reliability of peer reviewers' contact information; and after that, they are also able to validate the accuracy of peer reviewers' comments and to make more unbiased decisions. If so, the retractions due to fake peer reviews would be absolutely avoided. Indeed, to facilitate the responsibility of journal editors, some journals have discontinued the recommendations of potential peer reviewers [4], and others suggest that only peer reviewers with academic and/or institutional e-mails should be eligible [5].

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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The wrong name was printed. Instead of Otenburger, it should be Ortenburger.

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