Reviewer’s report

Title: RePAIR Consensus Guidelines Responsibilities of Publishers, Agencies, Institutions, and Researchers in Protecting the Integrity of the Research Record

Version: 0 Date: 26 May 2018

Reviewer: Paul Taylor

Reviewer’s report:

This paper reports the outcomes of a discussion at a conference called "Keeping the Pool Clean: Prevention and Management of Misconduct Related Retractions". It's an interesting topic, and it is pleasing to see that it continues to be something that is discussed.

The report is a self-described summary of the discussion and other guidelines produced by COPE and others. It is my view that as a summary, much of the important detail about interactions between key parties (researchers, institutions, funders and publishers) is lost. The paper presents some basic and fundamental principles of research integrity, rather than anything specific for dealing with the complex areas of retractions. It is difficult to find any new recommendations amongst those listed, and many appear in the material that the authors reference.

There is at least one new suggestion in the section on 'Overcoming Barriers to Communication: An Agenda for Harmonisation', and it suggests that 'where possible, policies should be commonly agreed upon between institutions and journals to simplify legal permissions and promote compatibility...". While initially this seems attractive, the cost of undertaking such an activity would be exorbitant and prohibitive. There are also questions around institutional and publisher independence that need to be addressed. What happens for example, if one journal requires something different from the next? How many different policies might need to exist that apply to different journals? Similarly, the recommendation to "Establish adequate national oversight' is fine (although not new), but who is this recommendation aimed at? The reference to the Australian Research Integrity Committee is misplaced given that ARIC doesn't actually investigate misconduct but rather the process that Australian institutions have used themselves to investigate.

There is little in the paper that presents anything new, and there is little that it adds to the already existing literature on the topic. There are some parts that lack some rigour - for example, the claim in the conclusion that most retractions aren't due to misconduct should be referenced if there is empirical evidence for the claim.

A comparative review of extant guidelines to identify gaps and make recommendations to fill them would be welcome. There is plenty to do in this area...

I cannot recommend publication of the paper in its current form.

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