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RESPONDING TO WHISTLEBLOWERS WHEN CONCERNS ARE RAISED VIA SOCIAL MEDIA



- The tone of the allegations may be aggressive or personal. Respond politely; don't get drawn into personal exchanges.
- Sometimes the whistleblower may prefer to remain anonymous. It is important not to try to 'out' people who wish to be anonymous.
- It is important to take the discussion away from the public domain; don't engage in specific discussions on social media.

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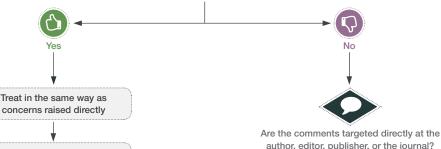
A PUBLISHED ARTICLE IS CRITICISED ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR A POST-PUBLICATION PEER REVIEW SITE(S).

THIS COULD INCLUDE ANONYMOUS OR NOT ANONYMOUS CONCERNS ABOUT SOUNDNESS OF THE DATA OR ALLEGATIONS OF PLAGIARISM, FIGURE MANIPULATION, OR OTHER FORMS OF MISCONDUCT

Let the publisher and the communications team know about any allegations. It is useful to establish an escalation procedure and agree a process for responding ahead of time



Do the allegations contain specific and detailed evidence to support the claim?



Respond via the same social media, ideally within 24 hours, saying that you are going to investigate

Let the authors know via email that concerns were raised and ask them for an explanation. You should not generally add them to an exchange (eg, in a Twitter response). If the concerns were raised only about the research findings, in some instances the authors may wish to respond themselves

It is appropriate to respond from a journal/publisher account rather than a personal Twitter account for legal and ethical reasons

RESPOND VIA THE

SAME SOCIAL MEDIA

TO SAY "THANK YOU.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO

RAISE A COMPLAINT

PLEASE CONTACT

[XYZ]." PROVIDE A

GENERIC CONTACT (EG.

CUSTOMER SERVICES),

WHO WILL BE ABLE

TO FORWARD THE

COMPLAINT TO THE

APPROPRIATE PERSON

IF THEY PERSIST WITH VAGUE CLAIMS, POLITELY SAY YOU CANNOT PURSUE THIS FURTHER AND DO NOT RESPOND TO ANY FURTHER COMMENTS

COPE Council.
COPE Flowcharts
and infographics —
Responding to
whistleblowers
when concerns
are raised via social
media — English.
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about the research findings, in some instances the authors may wish to respond themselves

Investigate according to the appropriate COPE Flowchart or guidance, and also follow own publisher's guidance

IF THERE IS AN OUTCOME TO YOUR INVESTIGATION, SUCH AS A CORRECTION OR RETRACTION, CONSIDER PUTTING INFORMATION ABOUT IT ON THE SAME SOCIAL MEDIA/SITE(S) WHERE THE CONCERNS WERE ORIGINALLY RAISED It may not be appropriate for Twitter but useful on other sites. Post a link to the resolution on the journal site

DON'T RESPOND,
BUT FLAG TO THE

Consider letting the authors know and explain why you are not responding at the moment. Make sure the authors will be able to access the comments (eg, some authors are not able to access Twitter or Google)

PUBLISHER SO THEY

CAN DECIDE ON

THEIR APPROACH