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# Truth and Transparency, Compromise and Climate Change

**The great enemy of communication, we find, is the illusion of it.**

— William Hollingsworth Whyte, 1950<sup>1</sup>

On September 6, 2022, a combined investigation by research integrity experts, data and analytics experts, publishing and operational teams, and legal counsels from Hindawi and its parent company Wiley, led to the initial recommendation to retract 511 articles that were compromised based on reviewer activity alone.<sup>2</sup> That same month, the physics publisher Institute of Physics (IOP) announced the retraction of 494 papers after investigation indicated they “may have been created, manipulated, and/or sold by a commercial entity” (or paper mill).<sup>3</sup> This October, the Elsevier journal *Thinking Skills and Creativity* retracted 47 papers that appear to have been generated by a paper mill because they were each accepted on the “positive advice of one illegitimate reviewer report.”<sup>4</sup> Paper mills and phony peer reviews<sup>5</sup> undermine the soundness of science, because they are based on illusion rather than truth. Truth (**veritas**) is only verifiable if it is transparent.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA), and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) have been collaborating to identify principles of transparency and best practice for scholarly publications.<sup>6</sup> The fourth version of this work in progress was published on September 15, 2022 and is available from: <https://publicationethics.org/files/principles-transparency-best-practice-scholarly-publishing.pdf>. The *Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery* upholds these principles of transparency and continues to strive to implement these best practices.

In a related development, the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM) has proposed a standard taxonomy for peer review,<sup>7</sup> recognizing a need to identify and standardize definitions and terminology in peer review practices to help align nomenclature as more publishers use open peer review models. This peer review taxonomy will help make the peer review process for articles and journals more transparent and will enable the community to better assess and compare peer review practices between different journals. According to STM, peer review should be described using four components:<sup>7</sup>

1. **identity transparency:**

- all identities visible: reviewers, authors, decision-making editor [editor] all visible to each other
- single anonymized: reviewer identity is not visible to the author, author and editor identities are visible to everyone (also known as single masked, formerly single blinded, review)
- double anonymized: reviewer identity is not visible to the author, author identity is not visible to the reviewer, editor identity is known to both (also known as double masked, formerly double-blinded, review)

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- triple anonymized: reviewer identity is not visible to the author or editor, author identity is not visible to the reviewer or editor, editor identity is not visible to reviewer or author (also known as triple masked, formerly triple-blinded, review)

2. **who the reviewer interacts with:** the editor only (traditional review), direct interaction with the other reviewers (with or without their identities visible), and/or directly with the authors (with or without identities visible)

3. **what information about the review process is published:** options include no information, review summaries, review reports, review reports if the reviewer opts to have review published, review reports if the author opts to have review published, the submitted manuscript (can be posted as a preprint), the submitted manuscript if the author opts in, the editor's correspondence with the author, the authors' response (rebuttal) letter, reviewer identities, reviewer identities if the review opts in, editor identities

4. **whether post-publication commenting takes place:** online comments may be either open (commenters may be anonymous or required to sign comments; could also include whether comments are moderated) or invited only; this item does not include letters to the editor. This item is not mentioned if no commenting is allowed.

Using STM terminology, the *Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery* may be described as follows:

- Identity transparency: Double anonymized
- Reviewer interacts with: Editor
- Review information published: None

We are updating our *Instructions to Authors* and *About the Journal* to reflect these developments.

On another front, the *Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery* has agreed to co-publish an editorial calling on wealthy countries to do more to support Africa and other vulnerable nations

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in mitigating the impact of climate change on health.<sup>8</sup> The guest editorial in this issue is authored by the editors of 16 African health journals, and is co-published by 259 international journals, including *The Lancet*, *British Medical Journal*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *National Medical Journal of India*, and *Medical Journal of Australia* and the *Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery* (see <http://press.pspings.co.uk/bmj/october/Journals.pdf>).

Never have so many journals come together to make the same call, reflecting the severity of the climate change emergency now facing the world. The authors, say, Africa has suffered disproportionately although it has done little to cause the crisis and urges wealthy nations to step up support for Africa and vulnerable countries in addressing past, present and future impacts of climate change.<sup>8</sup> They explain that the climate crisis has had an impact on the environmental and social determinants of health across Africa, leading to devastating health effects. In West and Central Africa, for example, severe flooding resulted in mortality and forced migration from loss of shelter, cultivated land, and livestock, while extreme weather damages water and food supply, increasing food insecurity and malnutrition, which causes 1.7 million deaths annually in Africa.<sup>8</sup> Changes in vector ecology brought about by floods and damage to environmental hygiene has also led to increases in malaria, dengue fever, Ebola virus, and other infectious diseases across sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>8</sup> In all, it is estimated that the climate crisis has destroyed a fifth of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the countries most vulnerable to climate shocks.<sup>8</sup>

The damage to Africa should be of supreme concern to all nations, they write, because in an interconnected world, leaving countries to the mercy of environmental shocks creates instability that has severe consequences for all nations.<sup>8</sup> We call on participants of the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) to take concrete steps towards achieving our collective climate goals by turning their commitments under the Paris Agreement into action, without falling short as they did in COP26 Glasgow.<sup>9</sup> Without compromise; in truth, transparently.