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Ethical and intellectual norms of refereemanship: A case of multiple violations – with notes on the *Guidelines* of COPE (the Committee on Publication Ethics).

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## **Abstract**

Prestigious peer reviewed scholarly journals, are preferred loci for research papers, since they convey a high bonus to academic records. The peer review process is regarded as an effective and fair basis for determining quality. Not surprisingly, new journals try to gain prestige by using it as an asset. However, it is not always realized that with this decision follows the obligation of editors and referees alike to adhere to basic ethical and intellectual norms of the research community at large, and scrupulously to ensure that deviations and violations are identified and eliminated from the procedure in each case.

To the background of the guidelines of COPE (the Committee on Publication Ethics), a recent example of systematic corruption and misleading assertions in a case of “double blind” peer review (where the referee and the author are assumed to ignore each other’s identity) is analyzed as a didactic assembly of violations of the basic code of conduct, perpetrated under the protection of anonymity. It is argued that the COPE guidelines need some enhancement to make the applicability of some important rules obvious. Further it is suggested that it should be a natural obligation of editors, before accepting a peer review as a basis for decision, to ensure that the review conforms to obvious ethical and intellectual criteria of best practice. This obligation should be mandatory for COPE member publishers, who benefit from the status provided by COPE.