

Document sent August 28, 2015 by Stefania Boccia, co-Editor in Chief, *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health*, in response to letters sent by scientists on July 17, 2015 and August 11, 2015, detailing concerns of scientific and ethical improprieties.

July 17th, 2015. In light of the foregoing facts, we request that:

- *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* publish a Conflict of Interest Statement for each of the authors of the article, "Critical reappraisal of Balangero chrysotile and mesothelioma risk" and also publish the submission date of the article.

The COIs from all the authors, for all the papers authored by Dr Ilgren and published on EBPH are available at <http://ebph.it/issue/view/540>. EBPH has never published the day of submission of manuscripts.

- *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* adopt and implement a clear policy requiring that Conflict of Interest Statements for each author and anyone involved in the development of an article be included in all published articles.

Thanks for the suggestion. Actually we are about to edit the sentence on the Col statement of authors (<http://ebph.it/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>) so that the current 'All submissions must include disclosure of all relationships that could be viewed as presenting a potential conflict of interest. The Editor may use such information as a basis for editorial decisions, and will publish such disclosures if they are believed to be important to readers in judging the manuscript' will be modified as follows: 'All submissions must include disclosure of all relationships that could be viewed as presenting a potential conflict of interest. The Editor may use such information as a basis for editorial decisions, and will publish such disclosures in the published manuscript'.

- *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* adopt and implement a clear policy requiring Conflict of Interest Statements be published on its website by its editorial staff and members of its editorial boards.

In line with the journal policy, each time the Editors (in Chief, plus Executive Consulting) handle a certain manuscript, they are indeed required to declare their potential COI. If a conflict is present, they cannot handle the manuscript. It might be that this aspect is not clearly reported in our website. We will consider clarifying it.

- The Italian Society of Medical Statistics and Clinical Epidemiology adopt and implement a clear policy requiring Conflict of Interest Statements be published on its website by its board members, as is the practice of COPE (<http://publicationethics.org/about/council>) and the International Joint Policy Committee of Societies of Epidemiology (<http://www.iipc-se.org/about.php>).

As I formerly stated, this a topic that will be discussed in the context of the forthcoming meeting of the directory board of the SISMEC in September.

- Peer reviewers be required to provide a Conflict of Interest Statement and that they not participate in reviewing any article when they have potential conflicting interests.

Thank you for this suggestion, we will implement this aspect as soon as possible, so that reviewers will be asked to declare any potential Col with the topic of the specific manuscript they are handling, or the authors of the same manuscript.

- *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* join the more than 7,000 journals that are members of COPE.

This is quite an expensive procedure for a young journal as ours, that we might consider in the future. Incidentally, we notice that several people who have signed this letter (and the second letter) do serve journals which are not members of COPE (e.g., , American Journal of Industrial Medicine, Indian Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, Epidemiologia e Prevenzione).

- The Italian Society of Medical Statistics and Clinical Epidemiology and *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* take urgent action via an open and transparent process, such as holding a working conference or some other mechanism, in order to put in place clear and effective ethical standards for both the organisation and the journal, including Conflict of Interest Disclosure Requirements, modelled on the work that has already been carried out by COPE and ICMJE.

Thanks for the very kind suggestion, we will certainly take it into consideration.

- *Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Public Health* adopt a policy to exercise particular vigilance with regard to submissions from authors who carry out industry-financed work that puts forward conclusions that serve the industry's interests and that go against the findings of independent scientists and reputable scientific agencies.

This is a relevant point, and we aim to discuss it in the next SISMEC meeting in the context of a broader discussion on ethical issues.

Aug, 11, 2015. Summary of requested actions

- We request that EBPH and SISMEC carry out the following actions:
Publish Corrections in EBPH that provide Conflict of Interest statements for all the authors of the three asbestos articles by Ilgren et al. and for Professors Pira, Romano, Piolatto, La Vecchia, and Negri.

The COIs from all the authors, for all the papers coauthored by Dr Ilgren and published on EBPH are available at <http://ebph.it/issue/view/540>. The request of publishing the COI for subjects that have been solely acknowledged by the authors is surprising. As you might know, the Authors of a paper are the only one responsible for its content their manuscript, and required to report any COI. We are not aware of any journal requesting people included in the acknowledgments of a manuscript to submit a Col.

- Initiate a transparent, participatory process for the adoption and implementation of clear ethical policies by EBPH and SISMEC, which include implementation of Conflict of Interest disclosure requirements.

See answers before.

- Publish the letter rebutting *Critical reappraisal of Balangero chrysotile and mesothelioma risk* without further delay. The letter by Magnani et al. and the response by Ilgren et al have been handled as all other similar letters sent to EBPH.

Dr Magnani is currently editing the pdf of the letter, and Dr Ilgren has finalized his rebuttal. We plan to publish both documents in Volume 3, 2015, of EBPH, which is due to appear by September 21st. The online first version of the letter and the rebuttal might become available earlier.

- Seriously evaluate the possibility of retracting Ilgren's articles.

There are no elements to take into serious consideration such request. The issue that you extensively raise on the references that Dr Ilgren has reported on his manuscripts are not correct.

First of all, the suspicion that the article 'Further studies of Bolivian crocidolite-part IV:....' might have been published in another journal is wrong. In fact, the paper is original and it has never been published elsewhere. It is possible that the same manuscript was submitted to Ann Res Med in 2012, and rejected afterward. Having said that, the authors are the solely responsible for their work, especially if they send the same manuscript to different journals. When they submit a manuscript, EBPH clearly requires that the manuscript has not been submitted elsewhere. If the author declare the false, this is impossible to check from editors.

Secondly, thanks for the in depth description of the quality of the journal titled Ann Res Med, that formerly published some work of Dr Ilgren and Colleagues. However, we do believe that verifying quality of journals that have formerly published work from authors that submit manuscript to our journal, is definitely out of EBPH aims and scope.

- Carry out a thorough evaluation of the scientific and ethical quality of the peer review process used by the EBPH reviewers to assess Ilgren's articles.

The process has been checked, and it was in line with our editorial policy.

- Initiate an investigation to evaluate whether Ilgren's articles comply with the scientific standards and editorial policies of EBPH and whether there is any evidence of editorial fraud by Ilgren and colleagues.

There are no elements to pursue such investigation.