What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(a) Suspected redundant publication in a submitted manuscript

Reviewer informs editor about redundant publication

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of overlap/redundancy

Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same data with identical or very similar findings and/or evidence authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g. by changing title, author order or not citing previous papers)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of duplication

Author responds

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour

Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

No response

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour

Inform author(s) of your action

Inform reviewer of outcome/action

Minor overlap with some element of redundancy or legitimate reanalysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience)

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal’s position

Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication
Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations

No significant overlap

Discuss with reviewer
Proceed with review

Note: ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original

Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for emails)

No response

Inform reviewer of outcome/action

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate

Check degree of overlap/redundancy
What to do if you suspect redundant (duplicate) publication

(b) Suspected redundant publication in a published article

Reader informs editor about redundant publication

Thank reader and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of overlap/redundancy

Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same dataset with identical findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g. by changing title, author order or not referring to previous papers)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work has not been published elsewhere and documentary evidence of duplication

Author responds

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Consider publishing statement of redundant publication or retraction
Inform editor of other journal involved

Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behaviour

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Note: ICMJE advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original. Editors may consider publishing a correction (i.e. the link to the original article) rather than a retraction/notice of duplicate publication in such cases

Minor overlap (‘salami publishing’ with some element of redundancy) or legitimate re-analysis (e.g. sub-group/extended follow-up/discussion aimed at different audience)

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal’s position
Explain that secondary papers must refer to original
Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper
Where editor has reason to believe failure to refer to previous paper(s) was deliberate, consider informing author’s superior or person responsible for research governance

No response

Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for current affiliations/emails)

Inform reader of outcome/action

Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication. Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations

Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication. Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations

Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behaviour

Inform reader of outcome/action

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

Major overlap/redundancy (i.e. based on same dataset with identical findings and/or evidence that authors have sought to hide redundancy, e.g. by changing title, author order or not referring to previous papers)

Note: The instructions to authors should state the journal’s policy on redundant publication. Asking authors to sign a statement or tick a box may be helpful in subsequent investigations

Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance
What to do if you suspect plagiarism

(a) Suspected plagiarism in a submitted manuscript

Reviewer informs editor about suspected plagiarism

Thank reviewer and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of copying

Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Minor copying of short phrases only (e.g. in discussion of research paper from non-native language speaker) No misattribution of data

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal's position
Ask author to rephrase copied phrases or include as direct quotations with references Proceed with review

Redundancy (i.e. copying from author's own work)—see flowcharts on redundancy

No problem

Discuss with reviewer

Author responds

No response

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Contact corresponding author in writing,理想的 enclosed signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Contact author's institution requesting your concern is passed to author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months
If no resolution, consider contacting other authorities, e.g. ORI in US, GMC in UK

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission, explaining position and expected future behaviour

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission or requesting revision, explaining position and expected future behaviour

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months
If no resolution, consider contacting other authorities, e.g. ORI in US, GMC in UK

Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance and/or potential victim

Minor copying of short phrases only (e.g. in discussion of research paper from non-native language speaker) No misattribution of data

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that submitted work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Write to author (all authors if possible) rejecting submission or requesting revision, explaining position and expected future behaviour

Inform author(s) of your action

Inform reviewer of outcome/action

Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it.
What to do if you suspect plagiarism

(b) Suspected plagiarism in a published article

Reader informs editor about suspected plagiarism

Thank reader and say you plan to investigate
Get full documentary evidence if not already provided

Check degree of copying

Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that work is original/the author's own and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Author responds

No response

Unsatisfactory explanation/admits guilt

Contact all authors and tell them what you plan to do

Consider publishing retraction
Inform editor of other journal(s) involved or publisher of plagiarised books

Consider informing author's superior and/or person responsible for research governance at author's institution

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

Write to author (all authors if possible) explaining position and expected future behaviour

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months
If no resolution, consider contacting other authorities, e.g. ORI in US, GMC in UK

Minor copying of short phrases only (e.g. in discussion of research paper)
No misattribution of data

Contact author in neutral terms/expressing disappointment/explaining journal's position
Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper(s) if this has been omitted

Inform reader (and plagiarised author(s) if different) of journal's actions

No response

Attempt to contact all other authors (check Medline/Google for current affiliations/emails)

If no resolution, consider contacting other authorities, e.g. ORI in US, GMC in UK

Note: The instructions to authors should include a definition of plagiarism and state the journal's policy on it