Abstract 6

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Abstract Information

Abstract Title: Addressing duplicate publications in biomedicine: a mixed method study
Abstract: Background. Duplicate publications (DPs) should be retracted as they can lead to biased estimates of treatments in meta-analyses. In MEDLINE, identical or nearly identical articles are indexed with a DP tag even when a duplication notification has not been issued by a journal.
Objective. To evaluate the reasons for DP indexing, journal handlings of DPs, and the reasons for the lack of acknowledgment or retraction of DPs. Furthermore, based on our findings we collaborated with MEDLINE in correcting incorrectly indexed publications.
Methods. We analysed all articles tagged as DP in MEDLINE, checked linkages to notices visible on PubMed or journals’ websites, reasons for duplications and means of dealing with them. Additionally, on 6-8 May 2014 we sent emails to all journals
editors whose articles have not been addressed by published notices to inquire of their awareness of the DP tag, as well as courses of actions they plan to make.

Results. Of 401 identified cases of DP, only 177 (44%) were addressed by notices, and just 23 (6%) retracted. For 253 (63%) duplication was caused by authors’ and for 48 (27%) by publishers’ actions. Additionally 237 articles were incorrectly indexed as DPs. Of those 111 have already been corrected and the rest are being processed. Up to 30 May, we received 84 (40%) responses from editors. Only 2 were aware of the DP tag.

Limitations. Crosssectional study design.

Conclusions. Duplicate publications should be handled with greater transparency and urgency in order to ensure trust and avoid waste in health research.