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# Ethical problems of secondary publications without author's knowledge

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This correspondence focuses on a case when several articles published in *European Science Editing* were subsequently published in Russian language in *Science Editor and Publisher* (for example, the article by Rozell<sup>1,2</sup>) without the knowledge of the author. This correspondence examines the ethical aspects and implications of this secondary publication for both the author and the editorial board.

The Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) licence<sup>3</sup> permits publishing in another language if the author and source are credited. In the case of the articles published in *Science Editor and Publisher*, all licence requirements were met, including the provision of a link to the original work. It is my understanding that, from a legal perspective, the publication of the articles in *Science Editor and Publisher* is thus acceptable.

The basic assumption in the case of secondary publication is that it is the author who submitted the manuscript to a second journal in a different language did so to make the information available to a wider audience. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors considers the publication of translated articles to be acceptable, but they recommend that it refer to the original and the editors of both journals agree to the secondary publication.<sup>4</sup> In the Committee on Publication Ethics, or COPE, case study 22–29, it is recommended to indicate who allowed the printing of another language version of the article. Some publishers also set out rules for translated publications; for example, Elsevier's guidelines set conditions for the publication of English versions of articles previously published in a local language.

One of the significant roles of local journals is to disseminate knowledge to domestic readers. English is the lingua franca of many

disciplines of science. Undoubtedly, there is a large part of every non-English-speaking society that does not speak English well enough or does not have access to prestigious scientific journals and thus cannot make use of scientific articles in their work. For these groups, the mediation of scientific information in the form of translated articles is an invaluable service provided by local journals.

The crucial question in this case is whether it is ethical for a journal to publish a work without the author's knowledge. Although the CC-BY licence allows for the distribution of a work without the author's consent, the author still retains moral ownership of their work. Publishing in another language could put the author of the article at risk. For example, in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine and the ban on cooperation between Russian and Ukrainian scientists,<sup>5</sup> the adoption of an article by a Ukrainian author by a Russian journal could endanger the Ukrainian author. The editor should therefore consider the political and ethical aspects associated with it.

The editor should inform the author of their intention to translate their work. The author should have the opportunity to express their opinion on secondary publication and, if necessary, reject it. This rule should become a standard of ethical responsibility for the editorial board.

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