ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR PREPRINTS

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An author service – not ‘publication’

To what extent are ‘traditional’ publication ethics appropriate?

Screening but no peer/editorial review

Preprint (n): an unpublished manuscript yet to be certified by peer review
Much is taken on trust

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Additional declarations for clinical preprints

- Competing interests
- IRB/ethics committee approval
- Patient/participant consent
- Clinical trial registration
- Reporting guidelines checklist(s)

Screening criteria

- Is it nonsense?
- Is it non-science?
- Is it a paper?
- Is it research?
- Is it plagiarized?
- Is it a health threat?
### Screening issues

<table>
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<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Public health</th>
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<td>Non-science</td>
<td>Dual-use research</td>
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<td>Pseudoscience</td>
<td>Vaccine safety</td>
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<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>Infectious disease transmission</td>
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<td>Patient identity</td>
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<td>Toxicity/carcinogenicity</td>
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### Either side of the line – "No"

What do clusters of similar HIV genetic sequences tell us about HIV risks in Africa?

"...most sex partners are in or close to home, genetic diversity showed little or no geographic structure in the three studies that looked at the issue. Evidence from these studies does not support the common view that sex accounts for most HIV infections in Africa. Studies did not do what they..."

Rejected from bioRxiv

### Either side of the line – "Yes"
Nevertheless...

“It’s the moment we’ve all been dreading... radiation emitted by cellphones can cause cancer.”

Signaling responsibly

Corrections

Authors may submit a revised version of an article to bioRxiv at any time.

But... once posted on bioRxiv, articles receive a DOI, are citable, and therefore cannot* be removed.

*Take-downs in rare circumstances
Retractions?

- Journal driven: flag and link to journal Retraction
- Author driven: flag as Withdrawn, give explanation, retain original
- 3rd-party driven: server has made no certification claim, so…

Withdrawals

Takedowns

- Copyright infringement
- Fraudulent authorship issues
- Biohazard
- Serious ethical breaches

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