



ELSEVIER

## Research results misappropriation Case Study 1

[The COPE Report 2000, case 99/28](#)

### Author dispute concerning ownership of data

A paper submitted to Journal X was reviewed and rejected with the recommendation that it be submitted to a more clinical journal. The paper was duly submitted to Journal Y. The authorship was A, B, C, D and E, with E being the corresponding author linking together two research groups in different cities, but in the same country. Journal Y sent the paper to reviewers and, after discussion, their decision was to open negotiations. Then, author C, the senior author from the collaborating institution wrote to the editor of Journal Y saying that E had used his data without permission. He now wants the paper withdrawn from Y. These data would then be combined with other data to be submitted to Journal Z.

The editor of Y contacted E, who was stunned—C had not told him about his letter. E claimed the data were his and did not belong to C at all. C was the principal investigator on a government grant covering one particular study. The paper with Y was a sub-study, not included in the government grant. Thus C, according to E, had no jurisdiction over these data.

Author C is getting increasingly angry.

#### Advice:

- \_ The editor thinks it's good work and has already gone back to E and told him to resolve the dispute with C—they are at different institutions.
- \_ The funding agency has jurisdiction over the main study only; the sub-study was funded by E's institution.
- \_ The editor of Y should stay out of this and put the heads of the two institutions together to resolve the matter. C signed off for Journal X, but not for Journal Y.

#### Outcome:

The matter is still ongoing.