

# Publisher retracts 64 articles for fake peer reviews

August 19 2015, by Bob Yirka

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Credit: Charles Rondeau/public domain

(Phys.org)—German based publishing company [Springer has announced](#) on its website that 64 articles published on ten of its journals are being retracted due to editorial staff finding evidence of fake email addresses for peer reviewers. Springer is one of the biggest academic/research publishers in the world, with over 2,200 journals dedicated to printing

the results of research efforts.

The [peer review](#) process is a tried-and-true standard for publishing [research papers](#) as it offers [publishers](#) a means of making sure the processes and results described by researchers are true—without such a process, no one would know whether to believe such claims.

Unfortunately, many publishers have been allowing a part of the process to be subverted by accepting reviewer recommendations from the authors of studies. In this latest instance, it appears that the thus far unnamed authors submitted email addresses for potential reviewers that led back to themselves, which allowed them to peer review their own work—a very clear ethical violation and a strong suggestion that there was something wrong with the work done or the way it was written. To be fair, the reason publishing companies accept peer review recommendations from author/researchers is because it's those same author/researchers that tend to know better than anyone else who would be most qualified to review their work, especially in areas of science that aren't widely studied. The problem comes about when publishers don't check to make sure the reviewers recommended by such author/researchers are verifiable.

Springer also noted that it informed the Committee on Publishing Ethics upon making the discovery of problems in its peer review process and promised to change its system to ensure that going forward, such mistakes will not happen again.

Unfortunately, this isn't the first time Springer has faced such a problem, just last March one of its imprints *BioMed Central* had to retract 43 papers for the very same problem. Other publishers have not been immune to the problem either, Retraction Watch recently noted that approximately 230 papers have been retracted from various journals over just the past three years due to problems with faked peer reviews—a very small number when compared to the hundreds of

thousands of research papers published every year, but perhaps a sign nonetheless, that publishers need to be more alert to the problem, lest they face the embarrassing headlines associated with slip-ups.

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