Report on acupuncture in patients with valvular heart disease and prosthetic valves – the opinion of COPE

Readers of the last issue of this journal will recall that the original paper with this title reported some work which did not have ethics committee approval, and so caused some consternation and heart-searching among at least one reader and the editorial staff. After considerable reflection, we decided the right thing to do was to ask for an independent and authoritative opinion from experts who are used to dealing with such matters. We therefore submitted the matter to the process offered by the Committee on Publication Ethics: this involved summarising the case as briefly as possible, anonymised to avoid problems of defamation, and also not giving names of journals, authors, institutions, countries or titles of papers. The case was duly considered by the committee, who made the following report:

**Discussion**
The committee discussed whether or not this was a retrospective cohort study without informed consent or ethics committee approval. The committee felt that this could also be an example of good clinical practice by the author in that having read about the potential for adverse effects of treatment X in patients with specific risk factors, he/she called back those patients at risk for a check up. The paper could then be said to arise from the writing up of the clinical practice. On balance the committee felt that the case as presented provided no cause for concern.

**Action**
None required.
In the light of this report, we accept that Anthony Stellon has been exonerated from the question of research misconduct.
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