Internet Journal of Medical Update

Journal home page: http://www.akspublication.com/ijmu

Editorial

Plagiarism

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"Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different."

T.S. Eliot

Plagiarism is a universal phenomenon and its scope includes not only biomedical writing but also other fields of literature. It is not a legal term, and various authorities define it differently. The word comes from *plagiarius*, which means "kidnapper" in Latin; cognate with the Greek adjectives *plagios* that means "crooked" or "treacherous. Ben Jonson has been credited by the Oxford Dictionary as being the first to use this word in print[1]. Additionally, the first English copyright law was passed in 1709[1]. The Oxford University website defines plagiarism as "presenting someone else's work or ideas as your own, with or without their consent, by incorporating it into your work without full acknowledgement"[2]. Plagiarism is a frequent and severe form of research misconduct that is often a result of lack of time, lack of energy to do work by yourself, poor research skill, poor mentorship (because the researcher thinks that the mentor will either not notice nor care), poor citation skill, lack of understanding of the English language or, gaining tenure, or increasing professional stature[3]. It not only is a matter of professional misconduct but also has legal implications. Plagiarism is typically practiced to improve one's personal position or for one's personal gain. Plagiarism involves either the unauthorized use of someone else's data or language[4]. In either situation, researchers may be dishonest, and editors or reviewers may even suspect fraudulence[4]. Plagiarism has two components: 1) using another's text, images, words, etc., without permission, and 2) passing it off as one's own.

Based on the feedback received from 879 teachers, Internet-based American commercial plagiarism-detection service Turnitin identifies ten types of plagiarism[5]. The most common is "clone," or "copy-paste": submitting someone else's work, word-for-word, as one's own without acknowledgment. The least common is "re-tweet," in which case the paper has proper citations but relies heavily on others' work[5]. Below is a discussion of other forms of plagiarism.

Self-plagiarism is when an author uses his or her own previously published work for subsequent publication as a brand new work. Self-plagiarism appears to be an oxymoron as it sounds practically impossible to steal from one's own work. Roig mentioned that an individual commits self-plagiarism when republishing the same paper, publishing valuable content from the previously published work or publishing a small portion of previously published work[6]. According to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICJME), the following conditions are exempted from self-plagiarism[7]:

- The secondary version faithfully reflects the data and interpretations of the original text.
- The editors of both journals are aware in advance the author wishes to publish one or more translations.
- The primary publisher has given permission for other language version to be published.

Duplicate publication means publishing the same scientific material more than once, by the author or publisher. It differs from plagiarism which is when some authors performs republication[8]. Duplicate publication is a research misconduct. However, dual publication is okay (publishing same paper in a different language with prior permission from the previous publisher and with acknowledgement). Professor Raveenthiran V expressed his views on duplicate publication on World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) listserver discussion on April 7, 2013[9]. He identified the problem with duplicate publications as copyright violation, wasting the precious time of reviewers and editors, affecting meta-analysis, pseudo-inflation of Curriculum Vitae (CV), wastage of printing resources, pollution of science

1

literature, and citation confusion[9]. Another problem is Salami slicing, which is also known as data fragmentation or partitioning a major study into multiple small studies . How much text can be recycled from the previous work? The Samuelson report states that few authors use the rule of 30%[10]. Opinion on this varies from editor to editor but it should be less than 30%.

How to detect plagiarism?

There are numerus websites providing reasonably high-quality plagiarism detection software at no cost. Free software are *plagiarism checker, duplichecker.com, plagiarisma.net, doc cop, articlechecker.com,* and *plagiarismsearch.com*. Subscription based software are Turnitin (mostly used to check the student's work and used by university professors and universities), iThenticate crosscheck software (works on the dynamic database of full-text articles and texts, comparing the authors' manuscripts with text available in its database), Grammarly, and Plagscan. The best available software to check plagiarism is iThenicate, but it is costly. If a journal is a member of the crosschecked network, it's a viable option for developing and low-income countries. Other cost-effective and reasonably functional softwares are Turnitin, Plagscan, and Grammarly.

Kerans *et al.* describe a sixstep approach to handling plagiarism at the editor's desk[11] – Step 1: Determine the percentage of copied material; Step 2: Identify the original source for documentation; Step 3: Asses the degree of seriousness; Step 4: Rewriting one or more patch-written fragments as a part of heavy copyediting in case of few fragments; Step 5: Ask author to revise the manuscript for better clarity and avoidance of plagiarism; Step 6: Checking and editing of the revised version.

Eldawlatly *et al.* appearing in an editorial simultaneously published in the Saudi Journal of Anesthesia and Anesthesia and Analgesia as "caveat lector" mentioned the ongoing saga of a plagiarized manuscript from a single institute[12]. Shafer in his editorial titled "You will be caught" also mentioned that 1 out of 10 submissions received by Anesthesia and Analgesia journal has an unacceptable amount of verbatim text without citations[13]. His first line of action is to ask the author to rewrite the verbatim text[13]. Another example of plagiarized article is the case report on Necrotizing fasciitis following spinal anesthesia from the same college from two different departments[14,15].

How can plagiarism be avoided[6]?

- Original contributions must be acknowledged.
- Verbatim text, patchwriting[16], and paraphragiarism[17] must be enclosed within quotation marks and must have a citation to indicate the source.
- When paraphrasing, we must reproduce the exact meaning of the original contribution as well as use our own words and syntactical structure. We also must identify the source and acknowledge it. If unsure about whether the concept is common knowledge, always provide a citation.
- If the results of a large, complex study cannot be comprehended in a single paper, they should be partitioned into individual papers[18]. Kassirer and Angell[19] also advised that, when doubt exists as to whether a submitted paper represents fragmented data, authors should enclose other published or unpublished documents that might be part of the manuscript under consideration for publication.
- Always tell the editor if there is any doubt as to whether a paper submitted for publication represents fragmented data (published or unpublished) that might be part of the paper under consideration.
- In the case of a paper presented in a conference, the author should first inquire whether the organization permits the republication of the article, and, if so, then the author should first inform the editors regarding the existence of the publication, and the same transparency should be followed for the sake of the readers.
- Ask a senior colleague or an editor for advice. Many institutions have a research development cell that can help the novice author.
- When publishing a new paper, check your manuscript before submission for language, words, or paragraphs similar to a previously published paper with the help of the "originality check" feature of various available softwares like Turnitin or iThenticate.
- Always double-check the citations and also compare the citation with the main manuscript. Always quote the citations from the original papers rather than secondary sources.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) has directed editors on how to handle plagiarism based on the seriousness of the matter.[20] Plagiarism is more prevalent in developing countries because of the lack of strict action against it and the fact that there is no uniform policy to deal with such an offense. India has a significant market for predatory

journals. Because of the newly amended policy for promotion of teachers in the Medical Council of India, many predatory publishers and journals emerged. These journals used to publish articles within seven days of submission upon receiving the article-processing fee. A journal of good quality should ideally mention its editorial policy. A peer review policy and their course of action against plagiarized manuscripts should be publicized by the journal. If an article is to be retracted because of plagiarism or fraud, top-quality journals never remove the article from the public domain but mark it as a retracted article. Additionally, ICJME recommends that the text of the retraction should explain why the article is being retracted and include a complete citation reference to that article. It is common knowledge that open access journals are not free of cost, but many open well-indexed open access journals are not charging processing fees. Open access publishers are not always objectionable. There are many such publishers, which display their policy clearly on their websites. The journal's policy should also make it very clear that payment does not automatically qualify an article for publication. A journal should not publish a paper without a proper peer review and without checking for plagiarism. It is challenging for novice authors to identify predatory or pseudo journals and unknowingly, many publish even useful and quality articles in predatory and/pseudo journals. To determine predatory or pseudo journals, read the WAME discussion posted on February 18th, 2017[21]. There are 8 indicators which helps novice authors to identify questionable open access journals: Journal asking for submission fees, very small editorial board, single publisher with large numbers of new journals at a time, available soon policy for issue without making it accessible, poor website, titles notes (international/national) does not match with editorial board or location, fundamentals errors in the title and lastly deviation of the content from title and scope of the journals[22]. Good open access journals should be listed in the directory of open accesses journal as well as into a major database publishes a regular issue on time, well-defined scope, reasonable size editorial board, clearly outlines the peer review and editorial policy and publication ethics statement[23]. One should follow the zero-tolerance policy to deal with such a nuisance of research misconduct in the medical literature. There should be a provision of intensive punishment debarring an author from submitting a new manuscript for a specific period or debarring the author from the academic post she or he is seeking. Such measures would likely help prevent plagiarism.

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