

EDITORIAL

PLAGIARISM

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Plagiarism is stealing and passing off the ideas or words of others as one's own without crediting the source and portraying the ideas as original despite deriving from an existing source. It is a grave academic dishonesty and should be deplored solemnly. It is in wide practice in developed as well as underdeveloped countries. Availability of tremendous amount of scientific knowledge on internet has made 'copy and paste' phenomenon so easy that plagiarism has gone rampant. Plagiarism is a phenomenon that is generally under estimated by the authors, however it can lead to serious embarrassment for them causing irreparable damage to their repute in the scientific community. Plagiarism can be avoided by paraphrasing, proper citation and the use of quotations. Plagiarism is a serious scientific misconduct and cannot be overlooked, hence, all the stake holders should realize their responsibility to abolish the practice from medical journalism.

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Plagiarism is a literary theft which involves the stealing and passing off the ideas or words of others as one's own by using them without crediting the source and portraying the ideas as new and original despite deriving from an existing source.¹ It is word-to-word use of original information without quotation marks, improper citation of sources especially where original text is slightly modified. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic dishonesty that is done to deceive readers about the origin of the ideas or words.² The reader is given a wrong impression that the person who appears to be the author was the original intellectual source whereas actual 'owner' of the source was somebody else. This is objectionable and unethical as the one doing hard work is not getting the deserved credit and acknowledgement for his own intellectual property.³ Plagiarism is a phenomenon that is generally under estimated. Literature review confirms that it is in wide practice in developed as well as underdeveloped countries. Availability of tremendous amount of scientific knowledge on internet has made 'copy and paste' phenomenon so easy that plagiarism has gone rampant.⁴

Plagiarism can be of ideas and words and is of several types. Direct Plagiarism involves word-to-word copying of a transcript without proper citation, attribution and the use of quotation marks. Mosaic Plagiarism is using borrowed phrases from a source without using quotation marks or replacing the original text with synonymous words without changing the structural format and meaning of the original work.⁵ Self-plagiarism is the submission of one's own previous work without disclosing.⁶ Accidental plagiarism occurs due to any neglect in the citation of sources, misquoting the sources or unintentional poor paraphrasing leading to use of similar words and phrases as present in the original text.

In medical writing, the main causes of plagiarism are lack of motivation, meeting short

deadlines and competitive pressure which leads to adapting unethical measures and shortcuts, giving rise to plagiarism. Plagiarism in medical research is detected first at the level of author while proof reading. If any inadvertent plagiarism is found, appropriate corrections can be made. After submission the research work is analysed for plagiarism at the level of reviewer and editor. The subtle and unintentional errors are pointed out and the author is instructed to correct them. However, the intentional and more severe form of plagiarism, if detected, can lead to serious consequences for the author.⁷

Strategies to avoid plagiarism in medical writing are paraphrasing, proper citation and use of quotations.⁸ The key strategy to avoid plagiarism includes proper paraphrasing after comprehension of the wholesome material. Paraphrasing is the use of ideas obtained during a research in one's own words. It involves the organization and interpretation of what is comprehended. Quotation marks are used for word-to-word copying of the material, however, longer strings can still lead to plagiarism. Proper citation of the sources is very important as other's ideas and information is being used.⁹ Not citing the reference properly may lead to plagiarism. Proper citation of the quotes used in a research material is important and is different from citation of a paraphrased material. Avoiding plagiarism in medical literature not only saves the author from embarrassing situations but also is an ethical obligation.

Plagiarism is a serious scientific misconduct and cannot be overlooked. Pakistan Journal of Physiology will not accept any form of plagiarism including fabrication, falsification, or other practices that seriously deviate from the accepted normal standards of the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. Responsibility for research integrity and reporting eventually lies in the hands of scientific community and all the stake holders like journal editors, peer reviewers, authors, co-authors,

educators, and students have to realise their role in eliminating plagiarism. Availability of scientific knowledge has not only facilitated plagiarism but also made its detection much easier. Various software are available which can detect similarity of a manuscript with existing sources on line.¹⁰ It is the responsibility of journal editors to use these software which would help in abolishing the practice of plagiarism from medical community.

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