

Short Communication

WRITING A SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE OR TELLING MEASURED LIES

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ABSTRACT

The scientists have a reputation of honesty and dignity and anyone who has ever falsified research is probably unwilling to reveal it. Medical journals are published to promote research in medicine for betterment of the public health. Plagiarism has been pointed before in journals but this study aims to bring certain new things under the discussion of falsification in medical publications. Objective of study was to highlight different points regarding medical writing which should also be included in the domain of plagiarism. Data was collected from 40 different researchers of Pakistan in past five years. The names and institutions were kept confidential. Three researchers admitted that they altered patients statistics. Twenty three out of forty did the same research as done before. Thirty researchers copied parameters from previous research. Eighteen authors added their names in someone else research. Twenty two hired mostly lab technicians to do lab work for them. Concept of falsifying is becoming a practice among researchers. This includes repetition of research work, hiring someone to do research work and adding the names in someone else research.

Keywords: plagiarism, medical writing, authors, duplicated research.

It is a common belief that we should not tell a lie. But all of us do so in some respect. The truth is in order to create a lie, the brain first has to stop itself from accepting the truth and then create the platform for deception¹. We have guilt of accompanying stress associated with the fear of being caught. The lie may or may not be justified, in the opinion of the liar or the community. The habitual liars usually prefer concealing to falsifying². To conceal facts one needs a good memory. There is no chance for people with good memory of getting caught because they create whole story in advance³.

Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said that he didn't have a good enough memory to be a liar. Scientists belong to a community who are thought to be reporters of truth. It is always an impression that they analyze the facts

through a series of experiments to prove these facts⁴. But sadly nowadays the concept of falsifying is becoming a practice among researchers.

In a study a group of scientists admitted to have modified data or results at least once during research practices. The scientists have a reputation of honesty and dignity and anyone who has ever falsified research is probably unwilling to reveal it⁵. Medical journals are published to promote research in medicine for betterment of the public health. In other fields such as literature and humanities, authors may have different views and feelings toward a unique incidence⁶. They express it in a few words or many lines. Unlike an author in the field of literature, the author of a scientific paper should follow certain well-established scientific methodology and has to report results which he observes⁷. He has nothing to do with the feelings of audience like in literature writing. In Pakistan the doctors require a certain number of publications for promotion. What now they do

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is to request someone to add their name as an author⁸. The credit is awarded to them by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. But in some good journals they ask the principal author to give list of contribution of each author⁹. Keeping this in mind this study was done to report certain facts which should be included in plagiarism in medical writing.

MATERIALS AND METHOD:

Data was collected from 40 different researchers of Pakistan in past five years. The names and institutions were kept in secrecy. They were asked to fill the following questionnaire.

Altered patient statistics	Reported same research as done before	Copied parameters from previous research	Added name as an author in someone else research	Hired someone to do lab work
3/40	23/40	30/40	18/40	22/40

RESULTS:

Three researchers admitted that they altered patients statistics. Twenty three out of forty did the same research as done before. Thirty researchers copied parameters from previous research. Eighteen authors added their names in someone else research. Twenty two hired mostly lab technicians to do lab work for them.

DISCUSSION:

Plagiarism has been reported and defined in past^{10,11,12}. In this study it was seen that in three researches patient statistics was modified. It included year in which data was collected, number of patients and male and female ratio. It has been seen that not only reporting original text is important but self-designed tables, graphs and layout is also important. Duplicated research material is also increasing day by day¹³. For how long we will keep on analyzing kymographs or blood groupings. Reporting this kind of work is wastage of money and also material. Most researchers apply for grants and are also awarded. Twenty three researchers reported

the same information as reported before. Using rats instead of rabbits with the same idea does not mean that you are doing something new. In our country many institutes are there to provide services for providing help in writing scientific publications material. These institutes should also guide researchers how to avoid plagiarism. In Pakistan many good journals are using software to detect duplication in research material¹⁴. Many soft wares have been designed like one in use in National Library of Medicine's MEDLINE, which abstracts all major biomedical journal articles. The software detects the sentences and phrases that are similar¹⁵.

I don't know whether it is falsification or not. Most of researchers hire lab staff to make slides, interpret desired results of slides and statistics for them. The person who has done the research himself knows the true story but falsifying the results would mean that results are based on an imagination. So there should be ways to check accuracy of results also. Twenty two researchers and most of them were those who were writing thesis hired services of lab staff to do the job. Also researchers should display the names of research labs where lab work is done. Sometimes in review articles, sections of the review are simply "lifted" from the author's earlier reviews¹⁵. This is often inadvertent the authors should be asked to rewrite the article before it can be considered further¹⁶. The other common form is the reprinting of methods. Here too, credit should be given to the author who first used this method¹⁷. On the other hand an author can use a few identical sentences from his own article; this is unlikely to be regarded as duplicate publication. However, if you quote an author to the extent that reading your article is like reading a condensed version of the author's own work then it is again plagiarism¹⁸. Authors deserve to be credited when you use their ideas or methodology in research. There are arguments as to regard it as plagiarism or not when an author submits two very similar articles to two different journals at around the same time or perhaps some time later (with just minor differences in, for example, the title and abstract). There is no instrument to know whether there is intention to deceive¹⁹.

The author would need to provide the published version of the paper with a statement that it also has been published in another journal²⁰. The publishers, including Elsevier and Springer follow this procedure. All these efforts are towards fighting for plagiarism of word but a very important aspect is addition of someone's name as an author who has contributed nothing in article²¹. Like names of wives in husband's article or names of friend just for sake of

friendship. Can we legalize this in our country because keeping our eyes closed does not change reality? This is a very serious misconduct and should be dealt with.

Conclusion: There are many misconducts going on in world of medical publications which should be added under headings of plagiarism. The plagiarism is not just copying the content but adding names of others in article without their contribution.

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