

Integrity in scientific publication

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Each and every scientific journal is concerned about the possibility of publishing papers that contain manipulation or fabrication of data, which generates false premises. Moreover, the unreferenced copying of data or text from other authors and dual publication are unacceptable.

Plagiarism comprises appropriation of the work, ideas, or words without proper acknowledgment, whereas self-plagiarism is the duplicate publication of an article in more than one journal. Plagiarism is a ghost that haunts editors of scientific journals. Because of the exponential increase of scientific article production, it is really hard to detect precisely such misconduct. In addition, the same digital media that facilitates the wrongful appropriation by “copy/paste” is essential to compare texts and to verify the fraud.

The instructions to the authors of each journal must be clear regarding such misconducts. There is no doubt that the work of a reliable reviewer may minimize the problem but does not eliminate it, especially because the pressure for publication makes plagiarism more and more frequent, particularly, but not only, among inexperienced authors.

In 2010, *The Singapore Statement on Research Integrity* was published. It states that: “the value and benefits of research are vitally dependent on the integrity of research. While there can be and are national and disciplinary differences in the way research is organized and conducted, there are also principles and professional responsibilities that are fundamental to the integrity of research wherever it is undertaken” (<http://www.singaporestatement.org/statement.html>).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy the work of The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), which comprises a forum for editors and publishers of peer-reviewed journals to discuss all aspects of publication ethics (<http://publicationethics.org>). COPE advises editors on how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct, and also provides detailed flowcharts on how to manage issues of potential ethical breaches.

Prominent universities and research institutions are facing the problem, and together with professional entities and governmental organs should create groups, committees, and associations to control and judge future cases of misconduct. Common sense and ethical behavior in scientific research and publication should always guide the researcher to avoid misconduct or even the production of irrelevant studies that only aim at increasing the number of publications.

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