

Plagiarism: An editor's concern

Plagiarism is a major threat to the integrity and grace of publication. Plagiarism could be intentional or unintentional. Intentional plagiarism usually occurs when the concerned author(s) will be benefitted by some academic degrees, promotion, or monetary benefit. Unintentional plagiarism results either from negligence or lack of awareness of the author(s). The distress of editors over plagiarism is palpable from the editorials published on this topic.^[1-4]

In the submissions to *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Investigation (IJPI)*, it has been observed that verbatim copying of previously published articles are more in manuscripts for review articles. Among them, many are detected to have plagiarism to a serious level. Plagiarism in manuscripts for research articles are mostly reuse of their previously published data (referred to as self-plagiarism). The process of peer review is not in many cases able to identify plagiarism, as reviewers usually concentrate on the manuscript content rather than comparing it with available literature. In the past, the detection of plagiarism was a real headache for editors as it was difficult to compare the hard copies of articles. But with the advent of online publication, this limitation has been overcome to a satisfactory level. Plagiarism checking software are now in use where plagiarism checking is carried out by comparison with previously published articles collected in a database. Plagiarism checking software are also available in trial and paid versions.

The *IJPI* manuscript processing system is equipped with inbuilt software for plagiarism detection. It has an option to check plagiarism by comparison of lines (exact search) or words (relative search). A significant number of manuscripts are received in *IJPI* where plagiarism is detected to different extent. The major types of plagiarism detected in the manuscripts include verbatim copying of previously published work. Self-plagiarisms in manuscripts where authors duplicate their entire previously published work are also of a major concern. Even a manuscript has been received in which the authors have just changed the author(s) details of an article published in a reputed international journal and submitted for publication in *IJPI*.

It was a real shock to me as an editor to see such plagiarized articles coming from some eminent researchers/scientists and reputed institutions. *IJPI* maintains a blacklist of such authors and all their subsequent manuscripts are either subjected to additional scrutiny or direct rejection based on the severity of their past plagiarism.

IJPI is dedicated to thwart all sorts of plagiarism. Though *IJPI* is taking all absolute measures to avoid plagiarism, some authors are smart in that they could modify the plagiarism such that the plagiarism checking software is not able to detect it. I am reluctant to discuss the various ways identified to circumvent plagiarism detection, as there are chances that some readers could try these for their publications. But I would like to advise that the authors should be pleased if plagiarism is detected before their manuscript gets published in *IJPI*. If any complaints are received regarding plagiarism in manuscripts after publication, the matter will be examined in detail and any misconduct will be intimated to the concerned authority of the author affiliation(s) for necessary disciplinary action. This would be in addition to a formal withdrawal of the published article.

Who could be held responsible for plagiarism? This question is many times a puzzle when more than one author is present. But as such it is considered that all authors are responsible for plagiarism and, in particular, the corresponding author. But in my opinion all authors are culprits in a joint publication, as it is the duty of all contributors to check and verify the content of the manuscript that is to be submitted for publication. All involved in the work should ensure that plagiarism is avoided. It should be the responsibility of the supervisor or investigator(s) of the sponsored project, who finally approves the work, to satisfy himself/herself that any sort of plagiarism is not present in the manuscript.^[3] They can curb plagiarism by making their fellow group aware of the facts and consequences of plagiarism.

At this juncture, it would be impeccable to have a note for *IJPI* authors on how to avoid plagiarism. The authors should use quotation marks when there is a verbatim copying of the original material. Due acknowledgement to original contributor(s) should be given by proper citation at appropriate places for each information. Use of plagiarism detection software before submission of manuscripts would be commendable. The above is not an exhaustive list of tips, but can solve the problem of unintentional plagiarism up to a great extent. I request all authors to strive for a plagiarism-free publication in *IJPI*.

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