

## Duplicate publication and the need to strengthen editorial policy of the journal

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Dear Editor,

I would like to call your attention to the article titled, ‘Current views and implications of journal impact factor: A key note’ recently published in the October-December, 2016, issue of South Asian Journal of Cancer.<sup>[1]</sup> This article had been written by Zaidi *et al.*

As an author who has published in your journal and would like to see your journal do really well in the future, I am quite concerned about the issue of duplicate or redundant publication that I see here. The same article had already been published in the Indian Journal of Dentistry last year.<sup>[2]</sup> Both the concerned journals are published from India by Wolters Kluwer – Medknow Publications. In its own ethical guidelines,<sup>[3]</sup> Medknow states that a duplicate publication is a violation of the American Psychological Association code of ethics.<sup>[4]</sup>

By the commonly accepted definition, a redundant or duplicate publication is the publication of a paper that overlaps to a substantial amount with an already published article without a “clear, visible reference to the previous publication.”<sup>[5]</sup> In this article, I do not see just a “substantial overlap.” What I notice is almost a complete copy-paste of the entire article as it was published last year. A simple check on Duplichecker<sup>®</sup> revealed 98% overlap of the text with the prior publication. The only

significant difference from the previously published article is the additional citation of a couple of references which were not mentioned in the previous article. Such marginal difference between the two articles makes it hard to believe that this is a case of simultaneous submission of the same article to two different journals which accepted and published the articles months apart. This is a deliberate attempt at publishing the same letter to editor in two different journals with only very slight modification.

Duplicate submission is not an acceptable practice in biomedical publication. When authors submit a manuscript, if a large part of it has already been published elsewhere or accepted for publication elsewhere, they are expected to clearly state so in their letter of submission. They should also provide the editors with copies of the related material. This will help the editors make a decision about how to manage such a submission.

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors does not, however, discourage editors from considering a complete report if the preliminary reports have been published earlier.<sup>[5]</sup> Such preliminary reports may include letters to editor or brief/short communications published in biomedical journals or abstracts and posters presented at scientific conferences. Papers that were presented at conferences but not published in full, or the ones which are being considered for publication in the conference proceedings, may also be considered by editors for their biomedical journals. If the trial results are published in a clinical trial registry, it is not considered as a prior publication.

Over the last decade, a significant number of articles have been retracted for misconduct detected only after the article had been published. This trend is due to the growing awareness among editors and publishers.<sup>[6]</sup> Attempting duplicate publication without any notification about the prior publication can result in prompt rejection of the manuscript. When such violations are missed out by the editors and the article gets published, the article is retracted by the editors with or without the author's explanation or approval and the article is marked as "Retracted."<sup>[7]</sup> If it remains unnoticed by editors of both the journals but is brought to the notice of the National Library of Medicine (NLM), both the articles may be assigned the publication type of "Duplicate Publication (PT)" by NLM even without any prior notification to authors or editors.<sup>[7]</sup>

As a journal that aims to adhere to internationally accepted ethical recommendations, South Asian Journal of Cancer needs to revise its Instructions to Authors providing clear guidelines about its plagiarism detection, duplicate publication, and retraction policies. This will help authors to decide what to submit and what not to. A stronger editorial policy will help improve the reputation and impact of the journal.

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#### Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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