

## The Pursuit of Originality Makes Us All the Same!

*“Ethics is knowing the difference what you have a right to do and what is right”*

–Potter Stewart.

The more efficient science has become in detecting plagiarism, the more efficient man has become in covering it up. The word itself being derived from a Latin word “*plagiarius*” that literally translates into “kidnapper,” refers to the use of others’ published and unpublished ideas or words (or other intellectual property) without attribution or permission and presenting them as new and original rather than derived from an existing source. It was in 1601 when *Ben Jonson* used the term “plagiary” and in 1755, the word first appears in a dictionary. It refers to a spectrum of actions ranging from intangible theft of idea to tangible theft of text without attribution to the original source. Plagiarism is not a recent phenomenon, but it has evoked thoughtful consideration over the past decade in the research fraternity. For most of history, plagiarism was not considered a serious infraction and, when it was, viewed in an economic rather than a creative light, just as it was with Martial. From the Romans to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, skill was prized over originality and many great artists and authors copied. This includes Shakespeare, who copied many of his most famous plots and passages, and Leonardo Da Vinci, who copied some of his most famous works. Recognizing it as a discerning subject, there is a dire need to identify what is to count as plagiarism. An explicit attempt is being made to understand and identify what constitutes plagiarism, does it seriously undermines the validity of scientific research, is it totally unacceptable or some degree of plagiarism can be overlooked.

According to the World Association of Medical Editors strict definition, plagiarism is when six consecutive words are copied. The literature points at various different ways of plagiarism – copy-paste, idea plagiarism, paraphrasing, artistic plagiarism, code plagiarism, forgotten or expired links to resources, no proper use of quotation marks, misinformation of references, and translated plagiarism, to name a few. Plagiarism not only deceives the publishers but also the readers who deserve to know what is original and what is recycled from other sources.

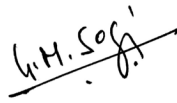
The science rely on the previous knowledge and new research results from the already-existing one; thus, obligation to acknowledge the work of others in order to curb plagiarism raises some interesting concerns about what requires citation and what not. Many researchers support the view that common facts do not require citation; however, there are arguments that common knowledge in one subject may not be common in another, so citation



would be necessary. Some say that if words are taken from an existing literature, the borrowed content should be enclosed in quotation marks. There is no technological application to detect the theft of ideas or to challenge the originality of ideas; therefore, plagiarism of ideas is most of the times blatantly overlooked. Another form of plagiarism is self-plagiarism, in which authors deliberately try to pretend the work is new when it is not, and on the other hand, it is just a small segment of their past work. In such cases, appropriate citation to their own work becomes utmost important. Presently, science is no longer limited to academic or research institutions; it affects the life of millions of people in the world. Weighing the effect scientific misconduct can have on the society, the United States of America established national bodies like the Office of Research Integrity to check violations in scientific conduct. Following it, many countries have established regulatory bodies to keep a check on research integrity. It is even the subject of legislation in various countries, including the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

Plagiarism can be difficult to illustrate as many of us will agree that this act of academic dishonesty lies on the Grey area of research misconduct personal ethics and integrity. Proper citation following standard guidelines could be one of the measures to handle plagiarism in health research reporting.

As part of scientific community, we are expected to have superlative morals and meticulously follow the ethical principals in conducting and reporting the research. In a race to “publish or perish,” one should not leave behind ethics which are the basis of scientific research since its inception. Practically speaking, the only way to avoid plagiarism is ethical and honest writing; as members of academic arena, the responsibility lies on each one of us. A plagiarized manuscript does not deserve a place in medical literature no matter how important the data is. In the words of Sir Albert Einstein “Many people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist, they are wrong, it is the character.”



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