EDITORIAL

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Unethical Behaviors of Authors Who Published Papers in the Biomedical Journals Became a Global Problem

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1. INTRODUCTION

Committee of Publishing Ethics (COPE) announced great problem with retraction of the papers published in journals which are cited in Web of Science data base, before and after retractions from the journals were papers published, because of unethical behaviours of the authors - https://retractionwatch.com/the-retraction-watch-leaderboard/top-10-most-highly-cited-retracted-papers/ (1).

In the text "Top 10 most highly cited retracted papers" is written "Ever curious which retracted papers have been most cited by other scientists? Below, we present the list of the 10 most highly cited retractions as of May 2019. Readers will see some familiar entries, such as the infamous Lancet paper by Andrew Wakefield that originally suggested a link between autism and childhood vaccines (1). You'll note that many papers - including the 2 most cited paper - received more citations after they were retracted, which research has shown is an ongoing problem". Although just missing out on the top ten and coming in at number 11 – with 670 citing articles - this article was previously designated as a "Highly Cited Paper" by Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science, meaning it was ranked in the top one percent of all papers in its subject field in the last 10 years (1). That fact is impressive.

Also, in our journal Jankovic S. et al. published paper about most frequent mistakes regarding used methodology and statistical analysis of the presentation of final results of the investigation, randomly taken from 43 journals cited in Web of Science. The authors found that basic principles of design (local control, randomization and replicaion) were completely implemented in only 7% of analyzed studies. Exactly the same result was reached when the same authors analyzed studies published in medical journals edited in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2).

Third important fact to be mentioned in this Editorial is about conclusions of presenters (Editors of medical journals from former Yugoslavia countries) at Scientific Conference "SWEP 2018" named „Ethical Dilemmas in Science Editing and Publishing", organized in Sarajevo, during scientific meeting "Days of AMNuBiH 2018", by saying that the advent of unethical behaviors in the academic community became an international problem (3, 4).

That problem became more and more interest of the Committee of Publishing Ethics (COPE), International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), European Association of Science Editing (EASE), etc., when trying to establish certain rules and standards to detect plagiarism and other types of unethical behaviors in scientific research and publications and to avoid and sanction it (5-8).

Scientific and academic community in Bosnia and Herzegovina after wartime in our country and also after accepting Bologna concept of education at our universities is in a major crisis when this is a problem. Text by Danijel Hadzovic „Sarajevo students and professors in the network of plagiarism: how much the master thesis cost?" raised his attention and interest in this problem.

In the article, he writes: „Affairs in the plagiarism of graduate and master theses or doctoral dissertations, in which the main actors are politicians and other high public officials, are not have been particularly novel in this area for long time. Nevertheless, the issue seemed to have taken on a massive dimension and became a new popular business activity (9).

It's enough just to search „making theses" on Facebook and you will find

literally dozens of pages that offer the services of writing graduation, seminar, and even master papers. Probably the most sophisticated site for such services is maturskiradovi.net. It is located in Serbia, but offers services in Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Hungarian, Macedonian and English"...

In a country where today almost every municipality has at least one faculty, and diplomas are printed on a factory lane, it should not be overwhelmingly surprising that many students will decide to buy for the money other's knowledge and present it as their own, to complete their faculty as soon as possible... The key question here is what competent institutions can do in dealing with this phenomenon that is getting more and more acute (9).

Figure 1. Screen Shot of List of Authors from Vietnam who submitted their papers in Medical Archives journal in 2020

2. EXAMPLES OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIORS IN THE "MEDICAL ARCHIVES" JOURNAL

The unethical behaviors of the authors who want to publish their papers in our journal(s) always occur because they do not know about so much information about COPE guidelines and rules. In Medical Arhives journal we "suffering" with a lot of cases of unethical behaviors long time, and some of extreme cases of plagiarsim and other unethical behaviours we already written in the past. Some of them we deposited on our web site: www.medarch.org making visible for academic community and as a measure to prevent cases in the future.

During submission of the papers on web site of the journal authors must submitt also forms of Copyright Assignement Form and Author's Contribution Form signed by ALL AUTHORS, as statment that they have read (final proof reading) formatted PDF of their paper and agreed with all conditions written in attached documents.

Because, prior to submission, we always declare *"I/We hereby confirm that the manuscript has no actual or potential conflict of interest with any party, including but not limited to any financial, personal or other relationship with other people or organization within three years of beginning the submitted work that could inappropriately influence or be perceived to influence. We confirm that the paper has not been published previously, is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and is not being simultaneously submitted elsewhere".*

Unfortunately, authors did not follow mentioned instructions, and it is very severe mistake which will make confused for any journals they submitted.

Editors cocluded at SWEP 2018 Conference that warning letter should be issued out along with announcement on the unethical behavior as a part to remind all of authors they need to know prior to submission (3).

Also, Editors need to announce to the authors of the papers about Plagiarism, as COPE to avoid any case like and propose to sanctioned it puting their names and affiliations on the "black list" (10-14). Because if journal(s) published paper(s), and later retract that paper from the issue, it will harm reputation of both journal and authors (15-18).

"All submissions are screened by a similarity detection software (iThenticate by CrossCheck). Manuscripts with an overall similarity index of greater than 20%, or duplication rate at or higher than 5% with a single source are returned back to authors without further evaluation along with the similarity report.

In the event of alleged or suspected research misconduct, e.g., plagiarism, citation manipulation, and data falsification/fabrication, the Editorial Board will follow and act in accordance with COPE guidelines" (3, 7, 8, 10)

In the next part of this Editorial we will show as example our data base www.scopemed.org - our DBMS an example of several papers submitted by Vietnamese authors this month, which we founded as duple or triple submited in our and other journals (Figures 1 and 2).

The first example (attached letter from reviewer):

Dear Prof Izet Masic,

There is one paper " Multidetector Computed Tomography of Blunt Bowel and Mesenteric Injuries: Diagnostic Accuracy and Association with Surgical Treatment " submitted both in Open Access Macedonian Journal of Medical Science and Medical Archives simultaneously. I am incidentally as reviewer of both journals and same manuscript, therefore, I reject it immediately to avoid double publications.

If authors continue double submissions from 2 or more journals, EIC and All EDITORs please follow COPE guidelines to ban authors from further submissions.

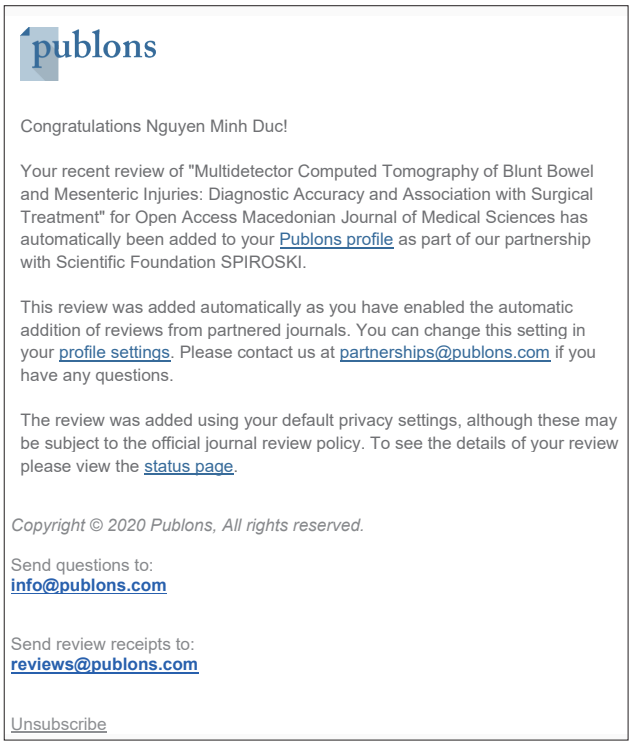
Thanks.

Kind regards

Dear N. M. D.,

We are inviting you to review the manuscript titled as (Multidetector Computed Tomography of Blunt Bowel and Mesenteric Injuries: Diagnostic Accuracy and Association with Surgical Treatment) that was sent for possible publication in Medical Archives. You could accept or reject this offer by clicking the appropriate link below.

If you accept reviewing, we will send your login information in following email.



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Congratulations Nguyen Minh Duc!

Your recent review of "Multidetector Computed Tomography of Blunt Bowel and Mesenteric Injuries: Diagnostic Accuracy and Association with Surgical Treatment" for Open Access Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences has automatically been added to your Publons profile as part of our partnership with Scientific Foundation SPIROSKI.

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Send questions to:
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Figure 2. Screenshot of confirmation from OAMJMS about papers review of Vietnamese authors

You should answer this message by clicking one of the option links below in 7 days.

Accept : http://www.ejmanager.com/reviewers/index.php?ro=a&de=1583066159&mn=84647

Reject : http://www.ejmanager.com/reviewers/index.php?ro=r&de=1583066159&mn=84647

Sincerely yours,
Editor
Medical Archives
amnbih@outlook.com
http://my.ejmanager.com/medarh
http://www.medarch.org/

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The aim of this study was to evaluate the diagnostic accuracy of computed-tomography (CT) findings in the diagnosis of bowel and mesenteric injuries, the association between these findings, and treatment strategy.

Methods: From June 2018 to July 2019, 86 patients that had 16-section multidetector CT diagnosis of blunt bowel and mesenteric injuries and had undergone laparotomy were reviewed. Two abdominal radiologists independently interpreted CT scans, and recorded mesenteric and bowel signs that referred to blunt bowel and mesenteric injuries. CT accuracy in the diagnosis of bowel and mesenteric injuries was determined with laparotomy findings that were considered as a gold standard. The association between CT findings and treatment strategy was quantified by an odds ratio (OR) and 95% confidence interval (CI) OR. Statistical significance was set at $p \leq 0.05$.

Results: Bowel-wall rupture, active extravasation, and reduced bowel-wall enhancement were findings that had a high specificity of 100%, 98.15%, and 100%, respectively. Pneumoperitoneum had the highest sensitivity of 83.33%. Bowel-wall rupture, Janus signs, pneumoperitoneum, and mesenteric stranding were significant correlations with surgical treatment. The presence of these findings increased the possibility of implementing surgical treatment seven-, six-, 29-, and threefold, respectively. Interobserver agreement was very good for bowel-wall rupture, active extravasation, bowel hematoma, and pneumoperitoneum.

Conclusions: Bowel-wall rupture was the definite sign of bowel injury and it had significant correlation with surgical treatment. Pneumoperitoneum was an unspecific sign of blunt bowel injury; however, immediate surgery should be considered when this is found.

Reviewer N. M. D.

Dear Editor in Chief

I doubted that all these submissions are double from OPEN ACCESS MACEDONIAN JOURNAL of MEDICAL SCIENCE or elsewhere and under consideration of 2 or more publishers. I have asked them but they did not tell me what they did and some disclose double submissions. I believe that we can not perform review because of wasting time and avoiding double publications. Please announce to other reviewers immediately to help them save time and mind.

Reviewer N.M. D.

Dear Prof Izet Masic

They violated severely Cope guidelines and performed dangerously task to improve the chance of publications! I have asked some of them, unfortunately, they submitted twice elsewhere, even three journals immediately! I think that rejection will save time for all editors, reviewers and publisher. Reputation will be cured at least for authors and journals. Maybe next time, they will know that all: Publisher, Editor-in-Cchief are very rigorous, balance and strict. Finaly, why Scopemed does not perform Ithenciate at least twice per manuscript? Why this happen! I think about the high plagiarism % which a severe but common problem!

Reviewer N.M. D.

3. DISCUSSION

Generally, unethical behavior in biomedical research is any significant mistreatment of intellectual property or participation of other parties, deliberately obstructing the process of investigation or distortion of scientific evidence, as well as all the behavior that affect the integrity of scientific practice (3, 5, 6-11). In 2000 the United States defined the unethical conduct in scientific research as fabrication, falsifying and plagiarism in the process of proposing, conducting and publishing the results (12-15).

Studies show that the unethical conduct is directly related to the following factors: a) Increased academic expectations and a greater desire for publishing papers; b) Personal ambition, vanity and desire for fame; c) La-

ziness; d) Greed, which is directly linked to the financial gain; e) Lack the moral capacity to distinguish right from wrong. In a broad sense, the author is any person who had significant intellectual contribution to a particular study. The International Comitee of Medical Journal Editors ICMJE as recognized organization dealing with ethical issues in biomedical research, defines authorship follows: a) Significant contribution to the concept, design, collection, analysis and interpretation of the study; b) Writing study template, or revision in terms of intellectual content; c) Final approval of the version to publication. The author needs to meet all three (5).

Every scientist has its own vision of what it takes to become the author. But often, among the authors of a project this visions are different. Personal conflicts and turmoil can often lead to disagreements on the issue of to whom belongs the authorship (5). It is defined as a publication of an article which is identical or largely. It is defined as a publication of an article which is identical or largely overlaps with the article already published with or without acknowledgment: a) Two articles share the same hypothesis, results and conclusions; b) The authors are trying to reach the readers who may not be familiar with; c) already published article, especially if it is in another language, such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Turkish, Albanian, Macedonian, etc. (5, 6, 10)

Duplicate publication is considered unethical for several reasons. a) The first is that in an inadequate way attempts to increase the scope of their own published works, other important, is that the article has the potential to change the image of documents; b) For example, if the results were taken into account two or more times in a meta-analysis, the results would not be valid; c) A study was conducted of all published papers in which was investigated the effect of the drug on postoperative vomiting (5, 16). It was observed that 17% of published papers was duplicates, in which 28% of patient data was a duplicate. This has led to a situation in which the efficacy of this drug was increased by 23% (5, 15). This example points out the danger of duplication of publications by scientists who have conducted research, especially when making conclusions about the efficacy and safety of a drug. Good practice in publishing an article requires that authors can submit drafts of their work only to one journal at a given moment. Regardless of this, still duplicate papers occurs and as such continues to be significant problem across scientific journals (15, 16).

4. CONCLUSION

Unethical behaviours, especialy plagiarism in scientific publishing is an almost unsolvable problem, and the greatest responsibility have editors of the journals and reviewers of the papers with which the authors apply to journals for their publication. ICT and various software packages help to detect plagiarism and other form of unethical behaviors of authors of the papers and other scientific publications, but for journals that publish works in local languages, solutions are still missing. Following this introductory word, followed the lectures which presented the above-mentioned problems from different aspects and in different fields of biomedical sciences.

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