



# Editorial Comment

**Alison L. Days, M.D.**  
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*If you steal from one author, it's plagiarism; if you steal from many, it's research.*

—**Wilson Mizner**, American playwright and entrepreneur (1876 - 1933)

For this issue's editorial comment, I am choosing to write about something more concrete than I usually do. It has come to my attention that many researchers, clinicians and academics do not know some of the protocol that comes with submitting articles for publication. I will attempt to clarify some points in this editorial comment.

As both an editor and an author, it is important to be aware of the following problems that may arise with articles for publication:

1. **Authorship:** An "author" is generally considered to be someone who has made substantive intellectual contributions to a published study. Authorship also implies some role in writing the manuscript and reviewing the final draft of the manuscript.
2. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism in publishing or scientific articles is defined as submitting something for publication that isn't an original work. This can include copying of a sentence, a paragraph or a section from another publication without giving proper reference. This may also include an author copying his or her own work in another manuscript after signing off rights for the publication to the first publisher of the work.
3. **Republication:** Republication implies submitting an article or manuscript to a publication that has already been printed or submitted to another publication/journal. Republication may be appropriate provided the prior publication and any relevant facts concerning such publication are disclosed to and agreed by the editor of the first publication. A brief explanation of these circumstances and full citation details for the previous article should be published along with the newly published version, preferably as a footnote to the title. Previous publication of an abstract during the proceedings of meetings does not preclude subsequent submission for publication, but full disclosure should be made at the time of submission.

Ways to avoid problems with these types of conflicts:

When submitting a paper, the author must always make a complete statement to the editor about all submissions and previous reports (including meeting presentations and posting of results in registries) that might be regarded as redundant or duplicate publication. The author must alert the editor if the manuscript includes subjects about which the authors have published a previous report or have submitted a related report to another publication. Any such report must be referred to and referenced in the new paper.

Secondary publication for various other reasons may be justifiable and can be beneficial provided that the following conditions are met:

- The authors have received approval from the editors of both journals
- The priority of the primary publication is respected by a publication interval of at least 1 week
- The paper for secondary publication is intended for a different group of readers; an abbreviated version could be sufficient.
- The secondary version faithfully reflects the data and interpretations of the primary version.
- The footnote of the secondary version informs readers, peers, and documenting agencies that the paper has been published in whole or in part and states the primary reference. A suitable footnote might read: "This article is based on a study first reported in the [title of journal, with full reference]."
- The title of the secondary publication should indicate that it is a secondary publication (complete republication, abridged republication, complete translation, or abridged translation) of a primary publication.

Additionally, authors should:

- Take credit only for work that they have produced.
- Properly cite the work of others as well as their own related work.

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- Make sure that all persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed.
- Make sure that each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

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Note: References for this comment were obtained from the following sources:

1. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors; Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. [www.icmje.org](http://www.icmje.org)
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3. American Society of Plant Biologists; ASPB News Nov/Dec. 2004, Vol. 31, No 6.
4. Brice J, Bligh J, et. al. Publishing Ethics in Medical Education Journals. *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 84, No. 10/October 2006 Supplement, S132-134

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