

# Plagiarism – How to Deal with It?

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I wrote about plagiarism many times in the past, both in domestic [1-7] and international journals [8, 9]. Then, why to write again on this topic that is of the great concern for the editors of the scientific journal? The motive is a text that appeared recently entitled “A tsunami of plagiarism in Serbia, but hardly any retractions” [10].

First of all, I think that the term “tsunami” in this particular case is a great exaggeration, and I agree wholeheartedly with P. Šipka in this regard [11]. Undoubtedly, the few published cases in the Serbian medical journals do not deserve this qualification. I personally believe that these cases might be the top of an iceberg, but certainly not tsunami.

Nevertheless, the second part of the article “...but hardly any retractions” reflects truly the actual situation in Serbia. Although the editors of our medical journal mentioned in the Tatalović article did detect plagiarism in articles already published in their journals, they did not retract them properly, as the good editorial practice recommends: *...if a fraudulent paper has been published, the journal must print a retraction... The retraction or expression of concern, so labelled, should appear on a numbered page in a prominent section of the print journal as well as in the online version, be listed in the Table of Contents page, and include in its heading the title of the original article.* In addition, *The text of the retraction should explain why the article is being retracted and include a complete citation reference to that article* [12].

Undoubtedly, the detection, or even suspicion of plagiarism, puts the editors in an awkward situation – how to deal with it, and how to handle with it. Fortunately, there are several sources of help. How best to deal with possible breaches in publication ethics may be seen in the guidelines (see below) and flowcharts designed by the Committee of Publication Ethics (COPE) [13], adherence to which is essential for prevention of plagiarism and correcting the literature.

As in other fields of life, it is always much better to prevent the possible plagiarism than to correct the literature. Recently, several tools for detecting possible plagiarism are produced, such as eTBLAST, Chimpsky, CitePlag, CopyTracker, Plagium, SeeSources, The Plagiarism Checker, Plagiarism Detect. These are all free. I personally, as the associate editor of the Journal of the Balkan Union of Oncology, was informed by eTBLAST [14] about a case of plagiarism, and the retraction was issued in due course. Other authors used eTBLAST to detect plagiarism in the manuscript submitted to their journal [15], which prevented the publication of such manuscripts.

Therefore, it is highly recommended that editors of our medical journals use these plagiarism detection softwares in order to prevent that fraudulent literature appear in their journals. Moreover, the subscription to COPE enables the editors to provide advice on all aspects of publication ethics and, in particular, how to handle cases of research and publication misconduct.

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