

Plagiarism

Steven R Goodman¹ and Robert T Mallet²

¹Editor-in-Chief, Experimental Biology and Medicine; ²Associate Editor, EBM Physiology category Chair, SEBM Publication Committee

DOI: 10.1258/ebm.2012.012e02

The US Department of Health and Human Services Regulation 42 CFR 93.103, *PHS Policies on Research Misconduct*,¹ which took effect on June 16, 2005, defines research misconduct as ‘...fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.’ This regulation further states ‘Plagiarism is the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.’ Unfortunately, academic plagiarism, knowingly taking someone else’s processes, results or words, without giving appropriate credit, is being encountered with increasing frequency by all biomedical journals, including *Experimental Biology and Medicine* (EBM). Sophisticated software has been developed to examine submitted manuscripts for possible plagiarism. The mounting problem of plagiarism has forced the implementation of such measures to protect EBM and maintain its integrity.

As a result of the increased awareness of plagiarism in biomedical journals, including ours, the Society of Experimental Biology and Medicine (SEBM) Council approved the following recommendations proposed by its SEBM Publication Committee in April 2012:

‘Accordingly, and based on our discussion with Dr Goodman, the Publication Committee recommends a three-tiered approach to sanctions: Level one: Limited duplication of text from the authors’ own published work, with somewhat more relaxed stringency for materials and methods: In these cases, the manuscript will be returned to the authors with instructions to rewrite/rephrase the duplicated text, before publication of the submission may proceed. If the materials and methods are heavily duplicated, the authors could be advised to reference their published work, thereby shortening that section. Level two: Substantial duplication of an author’s own work, or significant duplication of the work of others, will result in rejection of the manuscript. Level three: Duplication of an author’s own work so extensive that it could be considered an attempt to publish the same work twice [dual or redundant publication], or lifting of large chunks [sections] of text or data from the work of others, will result in rejection of the manuscript and, in addition, contacting the appropriate officials at the author’s institution.’ Clarifications in parenthesis were added by the Editor-in-Chief.

Effective July 1, 2012, all manuscripts thought to have a high likelihood of eventual publication in EBM will be evaluated by iThenticate plagiarism-detection software, which compares the manuscript text with a comprehensive database from the published literature. iThenticate will generate reports which will be sent to the assigned Associate Editor for review and possible further investigation. Findings of plagiarism requiring one of the sanctions described above will also be reviewed by the Editor-in-Chief before sanctions are imposed. Although plagiarism cannot be tolerated, it is our sincere intention to implement these policies with fairness, caution and impartiality. Additional information on EBM’s plagiarism policy can be found in our Instructions to Authors.

What can you do to pro-actively avoid unintentioned plagiarism within your own manuscripts? The answer is simple. Put your manuscripts through the same or similar plagiarism software. If you find the text substantially duplicates your own publications, modify your wording so that it does not repeat verbatim your previously published work. If you find your manuscript duplicates the work of other investigators, make sure that you indicate that you are using someone else’s words by the use of quotation marks and proper attribution in your reference section. If you are a first author, senior author and/or corresponding author, please ensure that this self-review for plagiarism is completed prior to submission.

In the Council of Science Editors 2012 White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications under Authorship principles, it says ‘Individuals listed as authors should review and approve the manuscript before publication...The ultimate reason for identification of authors and other contributors is to establish accountability for the reported work.’² Please take this responsibility seriously when submitting any manuscript to EBM.

REFERENCES

- 1 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service Policies on Research Misconduct: Final Rule. *Federal Register* 2005;70:28370–28400
- 2 Scott-Lichter D and the Editorial Policy Committee, Council of Science Editors. CSE’s White Paper on Promoting Integrity in Scientific Journal Publications, 2012 Update. 3rd Revised Edition. Wheat Ridge, CO: Council of Science Editors, 2012