

Publication misconducts related to copyright: tread carefully to avoid falling!

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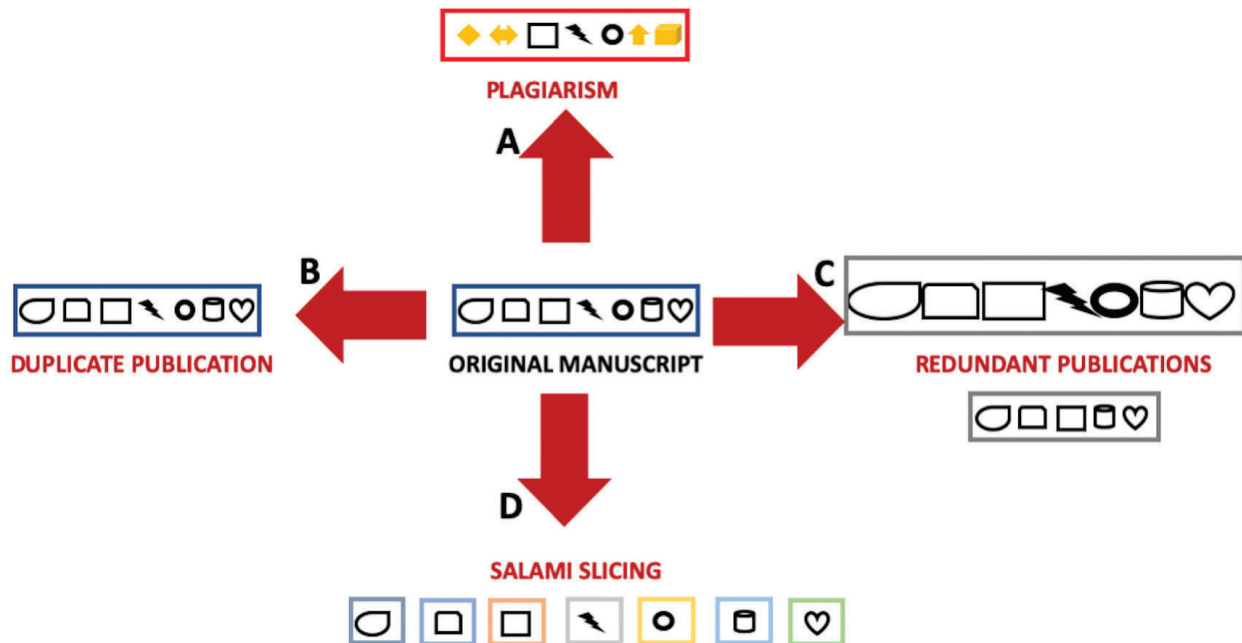
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Duplicate publications may be intentional, to artificially inflate the number of one's publications, or accidental, resulting from duplicate publication of a manuscript by a journal. Intentionally duplicate submissions result in rejection of manuscript and in retraction if it is identified after publication. Journals would also normally retract accidental duplicate publications and in these scenarios no blame is associated towards the authors. Sometimes, papers may be published with identical content

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Figure 1 Various types of publication misconduct resulting from violation of copyright. The figure in the centre represents the original (source) manuscript; each manuscript is identified by the colour of the rectangle encasing it, and the symbols inside represent the content. (a) Plagiarism would imply verbatim reproduction of parts of the manuscript within another one. (b) Duplicate publications are verbatim reproductions of the entire source manuscript. (c) Redundant publications may expand, or omit, certain portions of the manuscript, though the message remains essentially the same. (d) ‘Salami’ slicing refers to the splitting up of the source manuscript into multiple (here, seven) different manuscripts, when in fact all of this could have been included in a single manuscript



in two languages, often in English and a regional language, particularly in the case of regional journals, and this practice is considered acceptable.⁹⁻¹¹ The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors recognises the practice of simultaneous publication of landmark manuscripts, such as trans-society classification criteria or management guidelines for diseases in two or more different journals.

Redundant publications refers to publishing similar content to that already described in the literature, or previously published by the same authors.¹¹ Redundant publications may be more difficult to identify, requiring effort from reviewers and editors. Often, such redundant publications are rejected, unless there exists a compelling reason to repeat such studies as in the case of clinical equipoise, or the use of a newer or better methodology to conduct the study. If such a reason exists, it should be transparently declared in the covering letter accompanying the submission, clearly identifying the prior publication in question.⁹⁻¹¹

An emerging issue is that of duplicate images in scientific papers. There may be a temptation for authors to repeat images of laboratory tests, such as Western blots. Such

practices of not adequately referencing the previous publication should be cautioned against. Currently, technology has the capacity to detect such duplicate images using automated software, and may result in rejections or retractions.¹²

‘Salami’ slicing refers to the practice of inappropriately splitting research into multiple publications, when a single publication could logically reflect the entire content. For example, a researcher may have evaluated five biomarkers in a particular disease setting using the same patient population with similar follow-up duration. ‘Salami’ slicing would be publishing this work as five different papers, whereas the entire work could be coherently published as one paper. Such practices are often intended to artificially inflate publication numbers, are considered unethical and should be discouraged.¹³

In conclusion, it is important for all stakeholders, such as editors, reviewers and authors, to be aware regarding publication misconducts related to copyright and its violation. We have summarised these misconducts in Figure 1. Authors as the first point must avoid falling prey to these publication misconducts. **1**

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