

Re: Plagiarism and Other Types of Publication Misconduct

رد: الاتحال وغيره من إساءات التصرف
في النشر العلمي

To the Editor,

I read with great interest your editorial in the SQUMJ August issue “Plagiarism and other types of publication misconduct”.¹ It seems from your article that the main reason for the rise in plagiarism is the increasing pressure on faculty and staff in various institutions to publish, whatever their aptitude for research. In this “publish or perish” culture, a good clinician or a good teacher with no interest or aptitude for research is destined to lag behind his/her colleagues. This would be regardless of any other qualities and advantages s/he may bring to the hospital or institution. The situation s/he would face is to get left behind, or try his/her hand at activities that are not of personal interest, thus distracting him/her from more productive areas.

Digressing a little from the main thrust of your editorial, I wish to introduce the idea of a paradigm shift in the way we assess our medical personnel. Perhaps it is time to broaden our assessment portfolio to include qualities other than research and publications for assessing the worth of individuals. These may include objective criteria for assessing the individual's contribution to patient care, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and participation in departmental and interdepartmental activities or contributions in other areas. If proper assessment and weighting of these other types of contribution were done, it would both reduce the pressure on individuals to publish as well as enabling people who are interested in research to utilise the space left free by those who are not. This would lead to staff maximising their potential in the areas which interest them the most without hindering their upward mobility. I feel this would reduce the extent of plagiarism and possibly improve the quality of publications as they would be submitted by people who are genuinely interested in research. This may also help in retaining good clinicians and teachers in teaching institutions as, free of the pressure of publishing, they could devote more time and attention to what they are good at thus improving the quality of work across the board.

Anupam Kakaria

Department of Radiology & Molecular Imaging
Sultan Qaboos University Hospital
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
Email: bittanupam@yahoo.com

Reference

1. Al Lamki L. Plagiarism and other types of publication misconduct - a case for teaching publication ethics in medical schools. SQU Med J 2009; 9:1-4.