LETTERS

Plagiarism Among Faculty Applicants

To the Editor. The recent publication on plagiarism among faculty applicants is interesting.¹ Harirforoosh and colleagues shared their experience and concluded that “Faculty members are considered role models for students; their conduct has the potential to affect the reputation of the academic institution involved.”¹ Indeed, the problem of plagiarism in applications is common and can be seen in many levels. In a report by Segal and colleagues, plagiarism in residency application essays was “found in those by applicants to all specialty programs, from all medical school types, and even among applicants with significant academic honors.”² The interesting point is that plagiarism was found in applications from applicants from every background. Evidence of plagiarism was also found among applicants with academic honors, who are the same group from which junior faculty members are often recruited. Of interest, success in education, as evidenced by academic honors, does not guarantee that no evidence of plagiarism will be found in an applicant’s essays. The question is whether the present academic system is good enough for prevention of plagiarism.

One report showed that undergraduate and postgraduate pharmacy students lacked knowledge on plagiarism and did not perceive this unacceptable practice as a serious thing.³ Hence, teaching students about what plagiarism is and how to avoid committing it can be a good preventive method, and this training should be provided by academic institutions. However, the format for teaching sessions on plagiarism has to be considered. Marshall and colleagues reported that “advice and warnings against plagiarism were ineffective, but a subsequent interactive seminar was effective at reducing plagiarism.”⁴ Plagiarism

is also an ethical issue and having the proper attitude toward plagiarism requires correct training from childhood.

The problem of plagiarism can still be seen in medical academic programs. In cases of plagiarism, proper management of the situation is essential. The banning and blacklisting of an applicant who has been caught plagiarizing is one method for preventing these individuals from ever becoming a part of a faculty.

The problem of plagiarism among current faculty members also needs to be addressed. In some developing countries, plagiarism by a senior faculty members or administrator might be detected, but there is no legal or disciplinary system in place for managing those cases.⁵ Re-education and re-emphasizing the importance of “no plagiarism” in academic work, as well as establishing standards for all present academic faculty members, including senior and administrative faculty members, should be done.

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