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Reply

Dear Editor,

The scientific interest the article has generated amongst its readers is indeed welcome.

The establishment of Zika virus as a teratogen is undeniably intimidating. The only way forward to arrest its deadly impact on human health is the establishment of a surveillance system at national level. Entomological surveillance of Aedes and monitoring insecticide resistance would be crucial in formulation of effective vector abatement measures. The zealous implementation of vector management strategies, optimization of prediction tools, an alert medical fraternity and very importantly community involvement would all significantly contribute to prevention of outbreaks of dengue, chikungunya or Zika.¹

The authors agree that there is a need to include Zika in the differential diagnosis of “Fever with rash” syndromic approach to not only detect Zika activity in India but to also unravel its epidemiology in our country, if activity is noted.

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Letter to the Editor

Fraud and plagiarism: Important problem in scientific publication

Dear Editor,

We read with great interest both Contemporary issues titled “Plagiarism: a silent epidemic in scientific writing – reasons, recognition and remedies” by Debnath and “‘Peer review’ for scientific manuscripts: emerging issues, potential threats, and possible remedies” by Das published in *Med J Armed Forces India*. 2016;72:164–167 and 2016;72:172–174.^{1,2} For sure, presently, there are many kinds of misconducts including several forms of plagiarisms, peer review problems as well as others. Focusing on plagiarism in the article, several forms of

plagiarisms are mentioned.¹ Nevertheless, there are also other more complex kinds of plagiarisms and these cannot be easily recognized.^{3,4} Here, the authors would like to give some examples. First, figure plagiarism is an interesting but hard-to-detect kind of plagiarism. In investigative medicine subjects, the copying of picture is possible and it is not uncommon.⁵ This is very hard to detect by simple computational screening tool that mainly detects verbatim copying.³ The second kind of plagiarism is a translational plagiarism. It is also hard to detect this kind of plagiarism. Sometimes, more than one kind of plagiarisms such as combine figure and

translational plagiarism (such as seen that in “Chula Med J. 1980:597–604 [in Thai]⁶”). Our role is to recognize the complex kinds of plagiarisms and we should collaborate to combat these unethical problems. Finally, these kinds of plagiarisms are considered innocent and acceptable ones. Some uncommon kinds of innocent plagiarisms include double publication by agreement of two journals, republication with permission, and accidental erroneous publication by publisher. As an example, the accidental plagiarism caused by the journal can be seen and it is no doubt that this is an innocent plagiarism. Another kind of accepted plagiarism is the double publication in two or more journals of a single article due to the agreement between or among journals for multiple publishing or republishing and there must be a clear statement on that fact in the publication.

To manage the problem should be a more interesting issue. Shafer noted that “plagiarism is ubiquitous⁷” and “you will be caught⁸” if you perform a plagiarism. However, the situation is sometimes very complex. An interesting example is the situation described by Shafer that “what made this decision letter memorable was that I was the senior author. Because decision letters are implicitly directed to all authors, I had just sent myself a decision letter identifying plagiarism in one of my submissions⁷”, which is very impressive and raises some interesting questions in our mind. The first thing is the verification of the detected plagiarism. The plagiarist can be anyone, junior or senior academic person. In this case, there is an interesting question on how to manage the case of plagiarism on the work with multiple authors. The question is “are all authors responsible for the plagiarism?” This is a challenging issue. In general, only the corresponding author has the chance to finally approve the article to complete the submission process. It might require a system to pass the final submitted manuscript to all authors for checking and confirmation before the journal can start the processing of the submitted article. However, there can be more complex situations that some authors might not have a chance to know that he/she was named as author. A good example is the criminal case of plagiarism published in *Hepatitis Monthly*.⁸ In that case, “a doctor submitted plagiarized articles to the journal behind the name of a professor.⁹” Indeed, plagiarism in any form is considered unethical. Although it might be extremely difficult to find (such as figure plagiarism and translational plagiarism) and might not be detected,⁴ it is still considered a problem. Although the others do not know, the plagiarist(s) still know(s). Finally, the question that remains is whether there is any form of plagiarism that is considered innocent. As discussed, self-plagiarism⁶ should not be acceptable and repeated use of the published text by the same author should be avoided. There must be new modifications in writing and presentation with a proper citation and referencing.

Reflecting the mentioned issue on peer reviewing system, the standards and quality control are also needed. To combat this, the fake peer reviewing system has to be set. In a sense,

fake peer reviewing system might be a proposal of fake or disguised reviewer by the submitting authors and this has to be managed as a fraud and it is an actual misconduct.² However, a more interesting issue is on the fake reviewing by some journals in the group of predatory journals. Those journals are not academic at all but try to make money from submitting authors.^{10,11} For sure, there will be no standard in peer reviewing. It should be the role of the academic community to be against those predatory journals. Finally, the important but least mentioned issue is the correspondence and responsibility of the journals to the identified misconducts, frauds and plagiarisms. A good journal is expected to inform the author as well as the author's institute about the possible publication misconduct and also consider notification, retraction and suitable action like imposing sanction on the author as deemed appropriate. The institute might sometimes not respond or do nothing. Of interest, some articles with confirmed textual or figure plagiarisms or self-plagiarisms and identified by Déjà vu database¹² for a long time still exist in the PUBMED (e.g., “*Southeast Asian J Trop Med Public Health*. 2006;37(September (5)):1021–1024¹¹”). But the worst case might be the case that the journal do nothing or support the misconduct or plagiarism.¹¹

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Reply-1

Dear Editor,

I thank the esteemed readers for showing interest in the article on plagiarism¹ and enlightening our readers with many additional yet relevant facts about plagiarism based on their vast experience on the subject. I agree with the observant readers that there are many complex forms of plagiarism besides those mentioned in the article. The article was, indeed, intended to emphasize common forms of plagiarism, possible reasons for increasing instances of plagiarism, their detection, role of authors and editors in the prevention of plagiarism. As also mentioned by the readers, it is reiterated here that figure/image based plagiarism is difficult to detect by the commonly employed plagiarism detection tools (PDTs) as most PDTs work on text based similarity matches. This is an area of concern for the journal editors.

Regarding fixing responsibility for plagiarism in a multi-author submission/publication, all authors are supposed to be equally responsible for ensuring ethical integrity in their submissions. A journal policy should make it clear that all authors have to sign in the authorship certificate and declare that the manuscript is plagiarism free. Such mandatory certificates by all authors might at least be a potential deterrent for practicing overt plagiarism.

Plagiarism in any form should be unacceptable to the scientific community. If we have to curb the menace of plagiarism, there is a need to adopt 'zero tolerance' policy on plagiarism based on various parameters described in the article 1. As also mentioned in the article, plagiarism does not happen just by chance. The only exception could be occasional instances of honest error where the responsibility lies entirely with the author/s to prove innocence. I agree

with the authors that editors need to be very vigilant about various forms and faces of plagiarism and have never before increasing role in the detection and prevention of plagiarism in published material. It is not uncommon to see upcoming journals, many of which may well be considered as predatory journal, to have a lackadaisical attitude towards plagiarism.

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Reply-2

Dear Editor,

I thank the readers for showing interest in the article on peer review for scientific manuscripts.¹ The learned readers

have shared their valuable inputs on various aspects plagiarism and also raised their concerns about emerging issues related to the peer review process. I agree with the readers

that, there might have been dilution in the standard of peer review process in the face of rapid publication particularly by the paid and upcoming journals. Quality control of publications is possibly taking a back seat in a large number of cases. Getting a good and unbiased review for a manuscript takes time as good reviewers are not in plenty and they have their own commitments. It is the responsibility of a journal to ensure and uphold quality of the review process. Some practical and feasible steps have been elaborated in the article for ensuring a fair and quality review process.¹

Guaranteed publication on a fast track basis in exchange of money is now rampant in the academic circle. Most academicians now receive email invitations almost on a daily basis for submitting article in various journals with a number of lucrative options. The situation was never so dismal earlier. Typically, an anxious young professional desperate for a mandatory publication to ensure career progression, is the usual prey to such journals which can be aptly labeled as 'predatory journal'. The issue of predatory journals has been elaborated in an article by Cariappa et al.²

Another disturbing trend today is that of suggesting alternative sister journal of a particular reputed journal to an author whose manuscripts have not been found to be suitable for that particular reputed journal. Of course, this comes at a cost, as the sister journal happens to be an open access journal that levies publication charges from authors. Does it mean that if an article is found unsuitable in a good journal can find its way to its sister journal at some cost

although it was deemed unsuitable? Unfortunately, so far, there is no known legal recourse against such wrongdoings. The scientific fraternity needs to think seriously on these issues and formulate strategies to combat unethical and substandard publication practices for the sake of humanity.

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I read with extreme interest the original article titled “A prospective interventional study of effect of accelerated orthokeratology on the corneal curvature and refraction among young adults with myopia” by Khan et al. published in *Med J Armed Forces India* 2016;72:125–130.¹ The article is regarding use of specially designed rigid gas permeable corneal contact lenses to reduce patient's myopia of less than –5.0 D. Myopia is now a major public health problem, and uncorrected refractive error is ranked second as the leading cause of visual impairment in India.² The authors have rightly pointed out that it may be used as an alternative to conventional contact lenses or LASIK surgery for mild to moderate degree of myopia. However, most of the studies carried out on orthokeratology were for halting the progression of myopia in children.³ In a very recent study,⁴ the authors had compiled clinical case series from various online data regarding the safety and side effects of Orthokeratology and also concluded that OrthoK in general is a safe option for myopia correction and retardation. However, I have few queries:

(a) What were the changes in axial length of studied patients?

(b) Were there any decrease in quality of vision in these patients like problem of coloured haloes, glare or decrease in contrast sensitivity?

(c) Being in the armed forces, is there any method by which we can detect recruits/cadets who come for medical examination using these lenses in order to correct their myopia and thwart the visual standards?

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