

AuthorAID in the Eastern Mediterranean
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Research is a competitive profession and researchers can obtain rewards such as recognition, promotion, grant funding and salary increases for publishing as many articles as possible. This system of rewarding research production leads to pressure to publish.

Pressure to publish is intense in most countries, so researchers may try to increase the number of their publications by ways that gatekeepers (editors and reviewers) and experts in research ethics do not consider appropriate. Although many researchers have used self-plagiarism, “salami-slicing” (publishing only small parts of the results in separate articles) and duplicate publication in the past, gatekeepers now try harder to detect and stop these strategies, which are often considered a form of scientific misconduct. Manuscripts that contain material from previously-published articles will usually be rejected, and published articles discovered to be copies of other publications will often be retracted.

Self-plagiarism

Self-plagiarism refers to the practice of re-using portions of previous writings in another manuscript, without specifically citing the earlier publication. This practice is widespread because of pressure to publish and the difficulty (for both native and non-native speakers) of writing with “good scientific English style”. Journals have different policies and editors have different opinions about self-plagiarism, so it is important to read each journal’s instructions for authors before the manuscript is prepared.

The editors of *The Lancet* noted that readers are not happy to find the same material several times in different journals [Anonymous, 2009]. Researchers have no time to waste and need to obtain new information efficiently. If you re-use large parts of the same text in two or more publications, this may make a bad impression on your peers and they may not fully appreciate or respect your scientific contributions.

Although re-using words from other publications “usually violates the copyright that has been assigned to the publisher, there is no consensus as to how many words one can re-use before it is truly ‘[self]-plagiarism’” [World Association of Medical Editors, WAME, 2010]. This makes it important to check the journal’s instructions to see if there is a specific limit on the number or percentage of words that can be copied (with appropriate citation) from an earlier publication.

Some editors also require you to cite your earlier publications with any similar content in the covering letter. Doing this proves that you do not intend to deceive the editor, reviewers or readers. It also shows the editor that you have expertise in the research topic.

In biomedical and health research, self-plagiarism is considered almost as inappropriate as plagiarism. However, in other experimental science disciplines, and in social and human sciences, there appears to be more tolerance for repeating previously published material. Some experts in publication ethics say that once you have expressed something clearly, briefly and accurately it is better not to change the wording in later publications.

In the Methods section, some repetition may be acceptable for techniques, tests, assays and methods that need to be described accurately to facilitate replication. It may be acceptable for authors who have difficulty writing in English to republish parts of the Methods section to ensure that technical details are reported accurately [Roig 2009]. If the methods are commonly used and well known, they are often described in the same way in different publications. If the methods are new or not well known, it is important to provide a reference for the description if you published it previously in an earlier article.

The Introduction and Discussion sections are where your original ideas and thinking are reported, so it is important to use your own words to explain your new ideas. Usually it is not appropriate to re-use any word in these sections of an article. However, in the Introduction and Discussion sections a few words from an earlier publication can be quoted and referenced if your words provide the clearest explanation available. If the purpose is to “lay the groundwork for an ongoing discussion” (which may be the case when hypothetical or philosophical questions are being debated), changing the wording in different publications may confuse readers [Scanlon P, quoted in Akst 2010].

Self-plagiarism and self-citation have been used to convert ideas and opinions published in a non-peer-reviewed article into validated “evidence” included and cited in a peer-reviewed article. This is a strategy that misleads readers about the quality of the evidence, and that editors do not approve of. It is acceptable to cite your own ideas as opinion or speculation, because new ideas are always needed. However, it is not appropriate to cite them as scientific fact or evidence in favor of or against a hypothesis until they have been tested experimentally.

If you need to re-use the same words from any part of an earlier publication, use quotation marks, cite the earlier article and include it in the reference list, just as if the words were written by other authors. You must not to deceive the editor about the nature of the relationship between the original and the re-used text. If you have copied material from one of your earlier publications, you should explain why this was necessary in the cover letter.

Duplicate manuscript submission and duplicate publication

Duplicate (or multiple) publication is considered a violation of good publication ethics and can result in retraction of all published versions of the article.

The authorship statement is intended to prevent duplicate, multiple and redundant publication. In this document, you and all other authors certify that the manuscript is original, no parts of the manuscript have been published previously and it is not being submitted to any other journal simultaneously.

Duplicate manuscript submission (submitting the same or very similar manuscripts to two or more journals at the same time) can be detected easily by peer reviewers if the research topic is so new or so specialized that only a few people in the world are experts in it. Reviewers and editors may check earlier publications for evidence of duplicate material in a submitted manuscript. Editors and reviewers who read the same or very similar manuscripts for different journals may decide that you are wasting their time and trying to deceive them about the originality of the research.

Although it requires patience, you must not submit the same a manuscript to another journal while it is still being reviewed by the previous journal. However, if the decision from the journal takes more than a few months, you should contact the editor to ask when the decision will be communicated.

If authors intentionally mislead the editors about duplicate manuscript submission or duplicate publication, the editor may consider this a form of research misconduct. As a result, the editor may:

- publish a notice of duplicate publication, retract the article, or both, and

- ask the author's institution to investigate why the author did not provide accurate information to the editors.

Secondary publication

Secondary publication, a type of duplicate publication that is considered acceptable and appropriate, is the re-publication of the same article in a different journal (or other medium) after it was published in the first journal, with the permission of both editors. Secondary publication may be acceptable if the readers of the second journal are very different from the readers of the first journal, and if the information is important enough to be communicated to a different audience.

According to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), "certain types of articles, such as guidelines produced by governmental agencies and professional organizations, may need to reach the widest possible audience. In such instances, editors sometimes deliberately publish material that is also being published in other journals, with the agreement of the authors and the editors of those journals. Secondary publication for various other reasons, in the same or another language, especially in other countries, is justifiable and can be beneficial" as long as certain conditions are met [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, 2009].

It is important to let the editors of both journals know in advance that you would like to publish the same article in two (or more) different places. You should ask the editor and publisher of the first journal to give their permission for the same article to be published again, and should ask the editor of the second journal if he or she agrees that secondary publication is appropriate.

It is not appropriate to republish the same article without telling the editors and without citing the previously published version. This is considered misleading (intentionally deceiving) the editors about the originality of the information, and is considered unethical. In other words, duplicate publication (without the editors' permission) is not

acceptable, but secondary publication (with full disclosure and permission from both editors) is acceptable.

To make sure that readers know that the same information has been published in different places with the approval of the authors, editors and publishers, secondary publication should be documented carefully. The ICMJE recommends following these steps [International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, 2009]:

1. The authors have received approval from the editors of both journals.
2. The priority of the primary publication is respected by a publication interval of at least 1 week (unless specifically negotiated otherwise by both editors).
3. The paper for secondary publication is intended for a different group of readers.
4. The secondary version faithfully reflects the data and interpretations of the primary version.
5. The footnote on the title page of the secondary version informs readers that the paper has been published previously in whole or in part and states the primary reference.
6. The title of the secondary publication should indicate that it is a secondary publication (complete republication, abridged republication, complete translation, or abridged translation) of a primary publication.

Publication of an article **simultaneously in multiple journals** with different audiences is used only in special circumstances. An example is when an important policy statement or a set of clinical guidelines is issued. You must inform all editors in advance that you and the other authors want to communicate the information to as many different readers as possible, and plan to submit the manuscript to more than one journal.

Publication in another language

It is desirable for scientific and technical information to be communicated in as many languages as possible as a way to support universal access to new knowledge. Translation is especially recommendable for clinical guidelines, public health information and information about global environmental hazards.

The name of the translator should always be mentioned as a footnote on the first page or in the Acknowledgements.

Publication of the title, abstract and key words in more than one language is considered an indicator of high journal quality. Some journals translate this material but other journals require you to submit the translated material yourself together with the manuscript.

In addition to the title, abstract and key words, some journals publish the full text in more than one language. A few journals (for example, the *Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal*) publish articles in different languages and also provide the title, abstract and key words in two or more other languages.

Secondary (later) publication or simultaneous publication of the same article in different languages in different journals can be acceptable with full disclosure of the existence of more than one version of the same article. The authors should let the editors of both journals know when they submit the manuscript that they would like to publish the same material in another language. Like secondary publication in English, secondary publication in another language requires you to inform both editors about your intention when you first submit the manuscript, and requires the approval of both editors.

The authors should check the copyright policies of both journals. Some journals require you to give copyright in all languages to the publisher. In theory, this would make it impossible to publish a translation of the same article in a different journal. However, the authors can still ask the publisher for permission, and publishers will usually give their permission for this. If the editor or publisher refuses to give permission but does not have plans to publish any translated versions of the article, this is a potential obstacle to the dissemination of research results and new knowledge.

To avoid problems with copyright and plagiarism, you should carefully document all correspondence and permissions from editors and publishers, and keep all material in your records.

Disguising plagiarism or self-plagiarism by publishing the same article in a different language without permission and without citation of the primary version is not appropriate. Some experts consider this “translation plagiarism”. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) considers that plagiarism does not have to be word-for-word the same, and can be proven even in two different languages [Committee on Publication Ethics, 2007].

BioMed Central, which publishes many online, open-access journals, “is willing to consider peer reviewing manuscripts that are translations of articles originally published in another language. In this case, the consent of the journal in which the articles was originally published must be obtained and the fact that the article has already been published must be made clear on submission and stated in the abstract” [Anonymous, 2010].

The National Library of Medicine does not consider translations to be “republications”, so journals indexed in MEDLINE or PubMed are not required to identify a translated version of a previously-published article as a secondary publication. It is unfortunate that the MEDLINE record for each publication does not alert readers to the availability of other language versions. This means that it is important for all versions of the same article to include a citation to other published language versions.

Editors: If your journal is bilingual (if it publishes articles simultaneously in two languages), the National Library of Medicine (NLM) indexes only the primary language version. Fortunately, both languages are indicated in the MEDLINE citation, so PubMed users will know they have the opportunity to read the article in English or in another language they may prefer.

Example: Barriales-Villa R, Centurión-Inda R, Fernández-Fernández X, Ortiz MF, Pérez-Alvarez L, Rodríguez García I, Hermida-Prieto M, Monserrat L. Severe cardiac

conduction disturbances and pacemaker implantation in patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. *Rev Esp Cardiol.* 2010 Aug;63(8):985-8. **English, Spanish.** PMID: 20738943

How to avoid duplicate or redundant publication

1. Read the journal's instructions for authors carefully to understand the journal's policies regarding secondary publication. If the policies are not clear or if you have questions, ask the editor.
2. Cite your own previous publications (and use quotation marks for word-for-word quotations) the same way as you cite and quote from publications by other authors.
3. Write each manuscript (or revise it if it has been rejected) specifically for readers of the chosen journal. Even though specialized journals appear to have the same readers, there are differences in their preferences and expectations.
4. Follow the ICMJE, WAME and COPE recommendations to communicate your plans regarding secondary publication in advance to the editors.
5. If you have published (or have in press) another article with any similar or overlapping content in any section of the article (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Tables, Figures), cite it.
6. If you have submitted the manuscript, wait until you receive a formal rejection from the journal before you submit it to another journal.

How to ensure acceptable secondary publication

1. Explain your intention to re-publish the same article (in the same or in a different language) to both editors when you submit your manuscript.
2. Obtain permission from both editors for secondary publication in the same language. Provide the complete reference to the primary publication in the manuscript of the secondary publication.
3. If you want to publish a translation of your accepted or published article, obtain permission from the editor or publisher. Provide the complete reference to the primary publication in the manuscript of the secondary publication.
4. If possible, include the full reference to the secondary publication in the published version of the primary publication.

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