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## Editorial

# Dual Submission Leading to Dual Publication

<sup>1</sup>Maryam Sayab, <sup>1</sup>Muhammad Sarwar and <sup>2</sup>Ravindra P. Veeranna

<sup>1</sup>Asian Council of Science Editors, Dubai, UAE

<sup>2</sup>Department of Biochemistry, CSIR-CFTRI, India

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**Corresponding Author:** Maryam Sayab, Asian Council of Science Editors, Dubai, UAE

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Redundant Publication, also known as duplicate/dual publication is an unethical practice and a serious threat to research integrity which must not be ignored, either if done accidentally or by choice. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) narrates redundant publication as "Publication of a paper that overlaps substantially with one already published in print or electronic media"<sup>1</sup>.

Redundant Publications are most often the result of duplicate or multiple submissions of a single manuscript by the author to different journals either simultaneously or after getting a concurrent review by another journal. This act of misconduct not only damages the research integrity but also wastes the efforts and time of editors, peer reviewers and editorial staff. An author must be careful enough and submit the original findings to only one Journal at a time, which haven't been published yet or under consideration by any other journal(s). Preserving the research integrity, the journals must also publicly declare their Dual Submission Policy and consequences according to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and should not consider manuscripts that are simultaneously under review by other journals. Moreover, the copyright agreement should clearly state "That the submitted paper has not been submitted elsewhere and will not submit to any other journals for publication unless being rejected or un-notified within some period of time, clearly stated".

Recently one of the Journal members of the Asian Council of Science Editors (ACSE) has requested the council's guidance, advice and opinion on a case on Dual Submissions leading to Dual Publication<sup>2</sup>. The case concerns the duplicate submission of a manuscript by the same authors who had first published their article in a Journal A in the year 2011, which was also the year of submission of the manuscript to this journal. Soon after the paper was published by the journal A the same author submitted the very same paper to another local journal, named Journal B and he was successful in getting the same paper published in Journal B.

Upon receiving the notification and queries from indexing databases for the dual publication of their paper, the author immediately wrote to Journal A, to withdraw their published paper because the article is also published in another local Journal B.

In this situation, the editor of Journal A wrote the author several times that it's unethical and counted as misconduct under the category of dual submission and publication. Editor of Journal A also explained to the author that as the article was first published with Open Access in Journal A, so the author has no right to withdraw this paper because the findings have

been open for the entire research community to read and reproduce. Also, Journal A had the copyright statement from the authors, at the time of acceptance of the paper prior to its publication so the author cannot claim to withdraw the paper at this stage.

Rather than understanding the editorial policies and admitting the misconduct, the author insists to withdraw his article from Journal A, which published this manuscript before Journal B.

With reference to this case, the editor of Journal A has submitted the following questions to the Asian Council of Science Editors to help them figure out the best solution follow up to this misconduct case:

- What should be the practical advice to Publisher of Journal A?
- Who is responsible for such misconduct?
- If the author is responsible what should we do for the author's wrongdoing?
- Should we pursue the matter with the editor of the journal (Journal B) who has published the duplicate submission?

This case detail was also circulated among the members of the ACSE via the official blog of the ACSE, getting 2,347 views and 64 real-time comments from the Asian research community. All the members of the council have participated actively in discussion over this case and the diverse suggestions, opinions, views from the scholarly community for each of the question are:

### **What should be the practical advice to Publisher of Journal A?**

- Journal A has published the manuscript earlier than Journal B and should retain the publication
- Journal A should retract the paper because of dual publication
- Both Journals should remove the paper from their website
- Blacklist such authors and inform their employer
- Officially inform both the author and author's institution that this article has been retracted due to the unethical practices of the author
- Contact the editor of Journal B and discuss the misconduct and accordingly blacklist the author
- Both the Journals are suggested to write an editorial on "Dual submission and publication and its consequences" to spread awareness among the research community and to avoid such next cases

### **Who is responsible for such misconduct?**

- The approximate ratio calculated from the collective analysis of discussion is as
- 85% audience blamed the author
- 10% audience blamed both the editor of journal B and author
- 4% audience blamed Journal B
- 1% audience blamed Journal A

### **If the author is responsible, what should we do for the author's wrongdoing?**

- The author should be blacklisted
- The misconduct case must be reported to the author's institute along with details
- The paper must be retracted from both of the journals
- Author should be given a chance of explanation to both journals and accordingly withdrawing the article from one of the journals. (most probably B)
- Journal A should publish an editorial depicting this misconduct and retract the paper

### **Should we pursue the matter with the editor of the journal (Journal B) who has published the duplicate submission?**

- Majority recommends approaching Journal B to explore the actual details of misconduct and accordingly deal with the misconduct case under the guidelines of ethical committees
- Minority recommends to not to approach Journal B and retract the paper from Journal A

Seeking out the expert guidance on this submitted case, the description of this case along with the opinions of ACSE members on the Blog was sent to the Advisory Board Members of the ACSE as well as their members of Committee on Asian Publishing Standard (CAPS) for the proficient suggestions and remedies.

According to the Experts of the ACSE dual submissions is the least understood category of publishing misconduct and imparts a significant negative impact on the scholarly research community. The main cause leading to dual submissions include the researcher's fast approach to publishing the research results, especially early career researchers.

Dr. Kasier Jamil, Vice President of the ACSE emphasized that the author should never submit the article to two journals simultaneously. Journal A is at no fault if they had the signed copyright agreement. However, publisher A has a choice of not withdrawing the paper and informing the author about

unethical practice. On the other hand, Journal B did not check properly if the paper has already been published to any other journal.

Because the author submitted the paper after the paper had been published in Journal A, there are only two cases according to Charley Miao, Regional Director of the ACSE, as below:

**Case one:** Journal A signed an agreement. The author should be clearly asked to retract the paper from Journal B (in case Journal A has not done so yet) and Journal B should agree on this requirement and retract the paper as soon as possible.

However, if the author still insisted on his opinion, the paper should be retracted from both Journal A and Journal B, after Journal A has contacted Journal B and Journal B have also agreed to do so. In addition, Journal A should also notify the author's working unit about the author's unethical behavior.

**Case two:** Journal A had not signed an agreement, then Journal A has to retract the paper unluckily, while Journal B could decide independently whether to retract the paper or not.

The author has to commit that the article has not been sent to another journal in part or whole article. If the author has submitted such a letter to both the publishers, then it's the author's fault. And the article must be withdrawn from both journals.

One of the Advisory board members of the ACSE Prof. Dr. Muhammad Aslam, Pro-VC, NUMS, Pakistan, shared the possible approach of this case as:

- The author may be asked to withdraw the article for journal B and this fact be published in the journal
- If the author doesn't agree, then ACSE may write to journal B with evidence to withdraw and publicize the dual/ duplicate publication in the journal
- If author, as well as journal B, don't agree, then journal A may withdraw and publicize the fact in the journal. The author may be issued a written warning and penalty NOT to accept his article(s) in Journal A for the next 3-5 years

Highlighting the importance of this Issue Dr. Ravindra P. Veeranna, one of the ambassadors of the ACSE from Department of Biochemistry, CSIR-CFTRI, India brought a few points under consideration:

- Since the article is published first in the journal A, it is the responsibility of the authors (all the authors of the manuscript not only corresponding author) and also the editor of journal B to make sure that the manuscript is not submitted any other journal for publication
- Include the concept of ORCID in this case report, i.e., the journals should make ORCID mandatory so that the manuscript submitted simultaneously to more than one journal can be checked easily based on ORCID in the online interface
- The author should not only withdraw the manuscript from journal B, the author(s) involved in the dual publication should also apologize to both the journals
- It is mentioned in the present case that the authors go for dual publications mainly because of the fast publication of results especially in the early career researchers. Considering this perspective of the young researchers, the committee on publication ethics should make it mandatory to give the first decision from journals at the earliest, maybe a fixed period of 10 or 15 days

Further to the submitted case, the editor must contact with the corresponding author asking the detailed explanation about this and also figure out the time duration between both publications. As Journal A has prior published the paper and if it holds the agreement of the

copyright, the publication must retain with Journal A. The editor of Journal A may communicate the author to withdraw the paper from Journal B and explain to them the situation of being guilty or the editor of Journal A may share the article history with the editor of Journal B and request them to withdraw this paper as they re-published the already published paper.

Also, both Journals should initiate a letter of warning to ban the author on submission for both journals for 1 or 2 years and inform the author's supervisor about his unethical act to ensure that the author does not repeat this practice in the future. Moreover, the suggestion for journals is to revise their policy requiring copyright transfer on submission and make sure that the submissions must not be published already before accepting the article.

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