Publication Ethics: Part 3 - Plagiarism

Charon A. Pierson, PhD, GNP-BC, FAANP
Editor-in-Chief
Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners
and
Nurse Author & Editor

Objectives

- Define plagiarism in journal publishing, including self-plagiarism, unintentional plagiarism, duplicate (redundant) publication
- Describe two resources for detecting plagiarism
- Define public domain
- Develop a personal strategy to avoid unintentional plagiarism

Plagiarism Defined

- When somebody presents the work of others (data, words or theories) as if they were his/her own and without proper acknowledgment
- See article from Nurse Author & Editor (2010) Detecting and Preventing Plagiarism in Publishing by Pierson, C.
**JAANP Case - Plagiarism**

- Sole author submitted manuscript
- No cover letter, no statement of authorship
- Appeared to be a capstone project for a graduate degree
- Signed Copyright Transfer Agreement
  - (Part G states that this is original work)
- iThenticate® similarity index is 42% excluding bibliography
- What is your recommendation?
- What else should we have done?

**Plagiarism in Political Research**

- Congressional report challenging prior research on climate change found the authors “blatantly copied 35 of 91 pages” without citing any of the authors.

  David Rothschild, posted on iThenticate Blog
  16 December, 2010

**Revocation of PhDs for Plagiarism**

- Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg was stripped of his PhD after being found guilty of plagiarizing his law thesis and resigned his post as Germany’s defense minister. He has apologized.
- Silvana Koch-Mehrin, former vice president of the European Parliament, was stripped of her PhD because of significant plagiarism in her thesis. She has not commented.
- Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, another German politician, was stripped of his PhD for plagiarism. He blames the University of Bonn.
Copyright Issues

- Copyright protects works of authorship
- Authors generally transfer the copyright or the exclusive right to publish in a written agreement with the publisher at the time of submission or acceptance
- Permission to reprint or quote selected portions of an article must be obtained from the copyright holder
  - May not be the author but the publisher
  - May require payment of a fee
  - “Fair use” avoids copyright infringement

Acknowledging Sources

- Referencing styles are determined by journals or other guidelines
- Verbatim text must be enclosed in quotation marks and referenced – be aware of “fair use”
- Changing a few words or combining two sources to create something close to a published work is a form of plagiarism
- The ability to paraphrase properly and cite appropriately is an essential skill for success in writing and publishing
  - http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/
  - Paraphrase exercises
    - http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/619/01/

Plagiarism Detection Resources

- Comprehensive websites for more detail
  - www.plagiarism.org
- Academic users (subscriptions) - Turnitin®
- Commercial users (subscriptions) - iThenticate®
- Free sites
  - www.plagiarismchecker.com
  - http://plagiarism.bloomfieldmedia.com/z-wordpress/
  - Google
Public Domain

- Originally meant that intellectual property was at the end of the copyright period or that the copyright had been abandoned (mid 19th century)
- Examples
  - The works of Shakespeare can be performed and used for derivative works without permission or payment of fee but Shakespeare is always credited as the original author
  - The Authorized King James Version of the Bible holds a perpetual Crown Copyright in the UK
  - An authority on copyright is Professor Pamela Samuelson
    http://people.ischool.berkeley.edu/~pam/

What does Public Domain mean for authors?

- For example – the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS or Yesavage scale) is in the public domain (funded by NIH)
- Available without charge at http://www.stanford.edu/~yesavage/GDS.html
- You can use it freely in practice (as opposed to the Mini-Mental Status Exam)
- Available as an Android App
- Can be printed in an article without paying any fees but the original credit must be cited – you cannot claim to have invented it yourself

Avoiding Accidental Plagiarism

- Organize note taking
- Carefully cite sources
- Use quotation marks and add page numbers
- Retain original sources for rechecking
- Practice paraphrasing
- Think globally about the material
- Synthesize information to support your arguments
JAANP Case – Duplicate Publication

- Sole author previously submitted 2 plagiarized manuscripts that were rejected by our journal
- According to COPE guidelines, all of this author’s previous work should be under suspicion
- Author had published an article previously prior to our use of iThenticate®
- I rechecked previously published article and found a near duplicate in another journal
- What should be done in this case?
- What other recommendations do you have?

Summary

- Maintain good note-taking behaviors
- Learn to paraphrase appropriately
- Use plagiarism detection software if available
- Report suspected plagiarism or duplicate publication
- Adhere to copyright and “fair use” guidelines