

EDITORIAL

Plagiarism

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All original research builds on previously published work. An idea for original research arises from identifying gaps in already published research. Development of that idea into a study proposal incorporates knowledge acquired during the literature search of previous work in that area. Discussion of one's research findings involves a comparison with the current state of knowledge. During this process the researcher may deliberately or inadvertently commit plagiarism.

Plagiarism means copying someone's words or ideas without giving them due credit. This makes the reader assume that the content is your own original work. Plagiarism is not a legal crime but is considered as unethical, especially in the academic setting where original work forms the basis for tenure and promotion. The right to be known as the creator of an article or idea is a 'moral' right and is violated by the act of plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered as a serious offence and may result in retraction of theses and papers, losing your reputation and even punishment (including withholding postgraduate certification). Therefore, it is important to learn how to avoid plagiarism [1].

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How do you avoid plagiarism? The most effective way to avoid plagiarism is to write your paper using your *own words*. It does not matter if your language skills are deficient as you can get another person who has those skills to correct the grammar and vocabulary prior to submission. If you do the original draft of your paper, independently, it will definitely be original and will give you a framework for including your literature sources.

How do you ensure that you cite other's work? This should start at the time of doing your literature review. As you note down ideas from your literature sources that you will use to justify your objectives, adopt as your materials and methods or design your study protocol you should carefully *record* the source of these ideas for future citation. When you start writing your paper, using your notes, carefully identify which parts are original and which parts are

derived from your literature review, including any ideas, facts, texts or figures. Please note that you have to cite ideas from your *own* published research as well [2].

If you are using the exact words used by the author, you need to *quote* them by copying the identical words within inverted commas and citing the source of the quote. If you do not use the exact words but reproduce the ideas or findings of the person you need to express the idea in your own words (*paraphrase*) and cite the source of the idea. Your methods section may be very similar to previously published literature, especially if you are using previously published methods. In such cases, ensure that you accurately *cite* the methodology that you are reproducing.

Always read the original article that you are citing. Do not use citations from your literature sources as your citations *unless you have obtained and read the original article* and are sure that the fact or idea you are citing accurately represents the meaning conveyed by the original author. However, *do cite* any previous studies that were relevant and necessary for your work. Not citing important background studies can be considered a subtle type of plagiarism as you do not formally acknowledge the contribution of the original researchers [3].

When do you not have to cite something? You do not have to cite “common knowledge” i.e information that is widely available in many sources and known by many people, such as historic dates or geographical facts.

If you are able to access a plagiarism software, it is good to run your paper through the software to ensure that it is free from plagiarism before submission. The JPGIM uses *iThenticate* to check all papers submitted to the journal for plagiarism. However, it may be necessary to exclude sections such as material and methods and references from the plagiarism check as these areas will definitely have similarities with previously published material.

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