Letter To Editor

Good faith must prevail in ‘Unintentional Plagiarism’
(In response to – “Unintentional Plagiarism: The Price For Ignoring Literature Search”)
(http://www.ijpp.com/IJPP%20archives/2015_59_4/450.pdf)

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Sir,

We published our work on levels of mercury manometer with respect to heart in IJPP in 2015 (1). This was followed by publication of a letter to editor titled “Unintentional Plagiarism: The price for ignoring literature search” by Dr. S. S. Sircar, Dept. of Physiology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur in the IJPP 2015; 59(4): 450) (2) where a charge of unintentional plagiarism was leveled. The inadvertent attribution of Unintentional Plagiarism calls for attention and relook.

The accusation “unintentional plagiarism” deserves a relook in light of the following facts worth mentioning. The 1994 article authored by Dr. Sircar is not an original research paper. It is in fact a letter to the editor simply expressing views and an explanation as to why it is irrelevant to keep the mercury manometer at heart level while measuring blood pressure. Dr. S. Sircar has failed to appreciate the fact that the said authors have the conducted a full-fledged study in an effort to abolish the error prone practice among medical professionals to emphasise upon keeping the mercury manometer at heart level while measuring blood pressure. Our article thus serves to further the social cause of science and disseminating knowledge and newer concepts.

The authors have acknowledged another letter to editor (Kumar S, Sood A. A myth about measuring Blood pressure. RAPID RESPONSES, bmj.com/Cgi/eletters/322/7292/981#18832, 18 Jan 2002) (3), hence the omission of the said reference was purely due to the fact that the 20 year old letter was not easily available on the internet. This failure to refer to his letter to editor does not amount to plagiarism. It is a revisitation of the same idea and at most an inadvertent oversight. Nevertheless, the authors regret this error on their part with regard to literature search.

In response to Dr. Sircar’s letter I would like to put forth the following points:

1. The paper by Raj Kapoor et al (1) is an experimental evidence that students and medical professionals to interpret methodology with caution even if, written in textbooks of repute. Nowhere, has he borrowed any line explanation or data from Dr. Sircar’s 1994 letter to editor (4).

2. There is nothing wrong in reiteration and revisitation of a fact published 20 years prior for the benefit of medical practice, more so when the misconception regarding level of mercury manometer is still prevalent among medical graduates and paramedical workers.

3. Dr. Sircar has mentioned that the “onus of doing a literature search lies squarely on the authors” and the editors of the journal are not responsible. But this case is an exception as Dr. Sircar is both the author of the 1994 article and editor of the journal where the article in question was to be published. Hence, Dr. Sircar had the shared responsibility of pointing out the omission to the authors of the article in question before its publication as a result of which the authors would have taken appropriate steps and the so called “unintentional plagiarism” could have been
Avoided. In this way the strong words such as plagiarism could have been avoided for a mere oversight.

In light of the furnished information, the authors expect Dr. Sircar to publish addendum to this effect IJPP.

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References


Reply comments by Dr. S S Sircar, Editor Physiology: I regret using the word "Plagiarism". I hereby withdraw it. What I really meant was "Unintentional repetition". It was in no way meant to denigrate the authors. I appreciate the experimental data published by the authors that validate my idea.

Executive Editor's comments: The case in point has positive connotations: (a) We in India must preserve our old literature in Physiology and make it visible, (b) We as a Physiology Community should appreciate repeated scientific validations of the fact/idea proposed by our predecessors.