



EDITORIAL

Plagiarism and ethics in scientific publications[☆]

Plagio y ética en las publicaciones científicas

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The “publish or perish” phrase coined in American universities in the second half of the XX century has become a classic. This need to publish, which has since spread to the entire Western scientific community, stems from a meritocracy system that is based on an exclusively quantitative assessment of scientific publications.

Bibliometric indices (the number of published articles, authored international publications, author impact factor, H-index...) are currently the standard used to measure the qualifications of scientists when it comes to job applications, grant proposals or professional promotions, whereas the quality of the publications is not similarly assessed for consideration. The San Francisco Declaration On Research Assessment (DORA)¹ and the Leiden manifesto² are two initiatives that call for a change in the assessment of publications, focusing on their quality rather than their mere number.

The emergence and exponential development of information and communication technologies in the past 30

years have been decisive factors in this article churning madness. The substantial increase in scientific publications and journals, which ran parallel to the development of these technologies, has fostered an obsession in a subset of professionals with enlarging their résumés by increasing the quantity of listed works, in many cases disregarding their quality or the ethical problems inherent in their accumulation. The so-called “predatory journals”,³ scientific journals that publish articles in exchange for a fee from the authors and which do not apply the minimum quality filters, could be but the tip of the iceberg in this form of fraud, often promoting the publication of duplicates and in many cases even plagiarised articles.

Spanish paediatrics is not immune to this rat race and, regrettably, we have detected some cases of publication fraud in the form of blatant plagiarism of articles by other authors. Recently, it was discovered that a Spanish author had published in various international online journals exact copies translated to English of articles by Spanish paediatricians previously published in Spanish in domestic journals. The original articles that were plagiarised had been published in recent years in Vox Paediatrica, Acta Pediátrica Española, Revista Pediatría de Atención Primaria and Anales de Pediatría (Table 1).

It is obvious that plagiarism is an illegal act that must be prosecuted by the law and that is categorically outside

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Table 1 Spanish articles plagiarized in magazines published in English.

Original article	Journal where plagiarised version was published
Espín Jaime B, Rodríguez Martínez A, Salazar Quero JC, Rubio Murillo M, Pizarro Martin A. Fórmulas parcialmente hidrolizadas: ¿tienen algún papel en la prevención de la dermatitis atópica? <i>Vox Paediatr</i> 2013;20:24-30	International Journal of Allergy Medications
González Jiménez D, Larrea Tamargo E, Díaz Martín JJ, Molinos Norriella C, Pérez Solís D, Menéndez Arias C, Jiménez Triviño S, Bousoño García C. Eficacia y seguridad de una pauta rush de inducción de tolerancia oral en pacientes con alergia a proteínas de leche de vaca: evolución clínica e inmunológica. <i>An Pediatr (Barc)</i> 2013;79:346-351.	International Journal of Allergy Medications
Jiménez Martín AP, Torres Borrego J, Cañete Estrada R. Estudio de los niveles de IgE específica y de IgG4 respecto a la adquisición de tolerancia en pacientes alérgicos al huevo. <i>Vox Paediatr</i> 2014;21:16-21	International Journal of Allergy Medications
García Iglesias F, Sánchez García AM, García Lara GM, Mastocitoma solitario. <i>Rev Pediatr Aten Primaria</i> 2014;16:35-37	Annals of Clinical Case Reports
Martínez Suárez V. El pediatra y la salud mental del niño. <i>Vox Paediatr</i> 2015;22: 5-6.	EC Paediatrics
Melón Pardo M, Camacho Lovillo MS, Moruno Tirado A. Enfermedad de Kawasaki refractaria. Diagnóstico y consideraciones terapéuticas. <i>Vox Paediatr</i> 2015;22:28-31.	Peertechz Journal of Pediatric Therapy
Martínez González M, Rodríguez Catalán J, Mastro Martínez I, Del Rio Camacho G. Reacción inesperada tras la administración de metilprednisolona. <i>Acta Pediatr Esp</i> 2015;73:e247-e251.	Peertechz Journal of Pediatric Therapy
Gómez Ávila J, Andrés Martín A, Pérez Pérez G, Sánchez Gómez S, Navarro Merino M. Cuerpo extraño traqueal. Importancia del diagnóstico precoz. <i>Vox Paediatr</i> 2017;24:50-53.	Peertechz Journal of Pediatric Therapy

the bounds of scientific ethics. Plagiarisers often shield themselves with multiple excuses that cannot be accepted.⁴ Plagiarism is a scientific crime and should be punished as such.⁵

Ethics in research and publication is a priority for the editorial committees of serious scientific journals, so our Editorial Committee cannot but denounce any detected cases of fraud or misconduct. The tools that are currently available allow us to screen for plagiarism, but unfortunately they are not infallible and in some cases only the assistance of our collaborators can help us identify them.

On account of the cases of plagiarism that have been detected, this issue of *Anales* includes an interesting special article on the subject that is sure to bring to the forefront a real problem that is quite prevalent at present and that we face as editors, authors and reviewers.⁶

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