

Editorial

The problem of duplicate or redundant publications

We wish to notify readers that the paper by Freire et al¹ will be retained by PHN but a closely over-lapping paper by the same authors² has been found to meet the criteria for redundancy and will be retracted by the journal *Rev Peru Med Exp Salud Publica*. The authors' response regarding the redundancy is published along with this editorial.

In this incident, a reader notified PHN of the existence of a publication in a non-English language journal (*Rev Peru Med Exp Salud Publica*), which over-lapped considerably with the Freire et al. paper, which had been previously published in PHN.

How do we determine that a publication is redundant? The IJCME states that "Duplicate publication is publication of a paper that overlaps substantially with one already published, without clear, visible reference to the previous publication"³. Kumar et al, the editors of a group of cardiothoracic journals, identified 5 criteria used to define redundant publications: "the number or sample sizes are similar; the methodology is identical or nearly so; the results are similar; at least 1 author is common to both reports; and little or no new information is made available". All the points must apply for a publication to be considered as redundant^{4–6}.

Although there were some small differences in emphasis between the two papers, the data and analysis were the same. Included in the COPE flowchart is the statement that The "International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (IJCME) advises that translations are acceptable but MUST reference the original"⁷. Had the authors adhered to this rule, the second paper in Spanish may have been acceptable. However, they did not, and both journals concluded this was a case of redundant publication. Following the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines for such a situation⁷ the second journal originally published notification of redundancy and subsequently has retracted this paper. We will retain the original publication in PHN as it is understood the findings are scientifically sound and of interest. Some journals ban the offending authors following unethical behaviour, but PHN has not taken this step. However, the senior author's institution has been informed as advised by the COPE flowchart⁷.

The PHN instructions to authors include the following section on Publishing Ethics, clearly stating that the submitted work does not duplicate previously published work and has not been submitted to another journal.

Publishing ethics

PHN adheres to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines on research and publications ethics. The Journal considers all manuscripts on the strict condition that:

1. The manuscript is your own original work, and does not duplicate any previously published work;
2. The manuscript has been submitted only to the journal - it is not under consideration or peer review or accepted for publication or in press or published elsewhere;
3. All listed authors know of and agree to the manuscript being submitted to the journal; and
4. The manuscript contains nothing abusive, defamatory, fraudulent, illegal, libellous, or obscene.

Text taken directly or closely paraphrased from earlier published work that has not been acknowledged or referenced will be considered plagiarism. Submitted manuscripts in which such text is identified will be withdrawn from the editorial process. Any concerns raised about possible plagiarism or other violations of ethical guidelines in an article submitted to or published in PHN will be investigated fully and dealt with in accordance with the COPE guidelines.

We also ask authors to confirm that the article has not been submitted to another journal as part of the submission process.

In 2012 when I was a Deputy Editor of PHN we wrote an editorial on publication ethics⁸. Now, returning as Editor in Chief I am again prompted to address this topic to remind authors of their ethical obligations when publishing their work. This editorial can also serve to remind reviewers, editors and readers to keep in mind when reading articles that duplicate publication is unethical and should be brought to the attention of PHN editorial staff so it can be investigated and dealt with appropriately.

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References

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