

Maintaining Scholarly Integrity: A Worthwhile Endeavor

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As the *Athletic Training Education Journal (ATEJ)* continues to evolve and change, we editors are faced with new and interesting challenges. Developing awareness and educating contributors about potential challenges that affect the integrity of the *Journal* remain priorities. As the foundation of this *Journal*, education provides each of us a mechanism with which to reflect and consider our own work.

As a construct, the peer-review process is intended to promote fair and purposeful evaluation of the merits of submitted manuscripts. As the volume of research in athletic training education expands rapidly, *ATEJ* is subject to many of the challenges facing other scientific journals. As editor-in-chief, it was my privilege to attend the 2015 Council of Science Editors (CSE) Conference. At this prestigious event, dynamic presentations and informal dialogue among attendees prompted me into considerable reflection about our own *Journal*. Because *ATEJ* broadly embraces both qualitative and quantitative research, our editors must be attentive to potential concerns in a variety of emergent issues.

Ethical issues in scientific publication remain a key focus for journal editors in many disciplines. Most authors are quite familiar with the threats posed by plagiarism, which is formally addressed throughout higher education. However, the constructs of redundancy or duplication in some form are understood less well and not often discussed.

Different terms and definitions have emerged to identify specific actions taken by authors.¹⁻³ Generally speaking, *redundant publication* occurs when an author presents a significant amount of similar content in more than 1 manuscript without disclosing the potential redundancy. *Duplicate publication* occurs when a paper in its entirety is submitted to more than 1 journal without proper disclosure (such as in the case of translation).² *Shotgunning* describes the simultaneous submission of the same manuscript to several journals for consideration.⁴ In *text recycling*, authors reuse a specific portion of their text from previous works without appropriate permission or disclosure.² *Salami slicing* occurs when data are divided among several manuscripts without documenting different scientific purposes in an attempt to inflate the number of publications.²⁻⁴ Each of these practices presents a serious threat both to the integrity of the journal and to the science that is being disseminated.

Redundant publication is a critical concern. Although a single, all-inclusive, legal definition for redundant publication does not exist, specific factors indicate potential redundant publications. According to the CSE Editorial Policy Committee,¹ redundant publication is a possibility when (1) 1 or more authors appear on all the documents being considered, (2) the participants and/or methods are identical or nearly so, or (3) the reported findings demonstrate little substantial difference. Clearly, the true litmus test is to determine if there is any substantially new information garnered from the second paper in comparison with the first paper. In cases where subsets of data are used, careful review for redundancy is even more difficult but just as important. If the “common elements represent the essence of the work,” then redundancy is highly likely.¹

Redundant publication threatens the scientific literature in several ways.

First, redundant publication can bias the results of systematic reviews using meta-analysis. Second, multiple publication wastes resources. Third, because academic credit is based on the number of publications, redundant publication may give an unfair advantage to the authors.^{2(p3)}

Further, redundant publication can also violate copyright laws in some instances.¹ However, a common and permissible exception, often called *multiple publication*, occurs when an original manuscript is published more than once for purposes of translation.

Before submission, each manuscript must be carefully considered. The *ATEJ* authors' guide states: “The *ATEJ* follows the redundant publication guidelines of the Council of Science Editors, Inc.”^{5(p4)} Although the primary responsibility for ethical conduct lies with the authors, the editorial board and reviewers should be vigilant in identifying potential incidences of redundancy, duplication, and salami slicing.³ Each of these practices is condemned in the scientific publication arena. To prevent violations, each journal should have explicitly stated guidelines regarding these issues. Our goals at the *ATEJ* are to inform authors who use qualitative and quantitative methods of the potential threats that such actions present to our *Journal* and to educate our contribu-

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tors, reviewers, and editors about how to identify these problematic practices.

As publication professionals, we strive to be facilitative rather than punitive in addressing any potential concerns. When an ethical question is raised, we as an editorial team strive to work collaboratively with authors to obtain accurate information and to base all decisions on careful, deliberate adherence to CSE policy. As our *Journal* and community of scholars both continue to grow, being aware of potential conflicts helps us to maintain the integrity of our work. As scholars, our responsibility is to educate our students and colleagues about these issues, just as we have done regarding plagiarism. Working together to proactively bring these publication concerns, whether intentional or unintentional, to the forefront of our discussions will preserve the strong foundation of educational research in athletic training that we have worked so hard to build.

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