Editorial
Plagiarism: The Bane of Publishing

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Plagiarism - derived from the Latin word *plagiarus* which means "kidnapper"[1], is defined as the practice of taking ideas from someone else without citing the source.

Plagiarism in the region is documented - in 2008 the Medical Journal of Malaysia and the Singapore Medical Journal wrote a joint editorial deploring plagiarized manuscripts that were submitted for publication[2].

The Malaysian Orthopaedic Journal (MOJ) uses iThenticate, an anti-plagiarism software to scan the manuscripts submitted. The software highlights sentences that are not original and identifies the primary online source. Sentences with the highest similarity from a single source will be red-flagged and the percentage displayed. Editors now have the benefit of detecting copied sentences during the initial review process[3].

In a recent submission to the MOJ, two manuscripts had a similarity index of more than 10% from a single source. The first manuscript had a similarity index of 18% and the main source was a conference abstract. Although this would not constitute plagiarism or a duplicate publication, the authors have to notify the editor that a part of their manuscript had been published. The second manuscript had a similarity index of 15%. The sentences that were copied were found in the introduction and discussion sections of the manuscript. These were from open access articles available in PubMed Central.

The MOJ does not have a specific cut-off percentage to return manuscripts to the authors. However, Bentham Science Publishers returns manuscripts with more than 5% similarity index from a single source to the authors for paraphrasing[4].

Heitman and Litewka[5] have cited several reasons for plagiarism especially in countries where English is not the first language. These include an unawareness of what constitutes plagiarism and a poor command of the English language leading to difficulties in expressing ideas fluently. Another reason lies in the school education system. Secondary school students in the USA are trained to cite references in their writings but this skill may not have been taught in countries where English is the second language[6].

To avoid plagiarism, the MOJ through its publication courses, will continue to train authors on the ethos of writing.

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