

Consensus statement

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Menace of Simultaneous Duplicate Submissions: A Consensus Statement

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Ethical publication practices are essential for integrity in science. Any attempt at compromising the ethical practices, leads to suspicion of the honesty and integrity of the authors and the validity of the data that is generated from the authors' institution. Some of these ethical violations are severe and punishable in law whilst others are not so serious but annoying, and need to be frowned upon. One such common ethical publication malpractice is duplicate submission or simultaneous submission. The 'International committee of Medical Journal Editors' (ICMJE) has prepared extensive guidelines now called recommendations [1] and the 'Committee on Publication Ethics' has also released a 'Code of conduct' and 'best practice guidelines' for journal editors [2] to help them to tackle the

ethical issues.

Duplicate submission is submission of the same or substantially similar manuscript by the same author(s) to more than one journal at the same time or at intervals without acknowledging the prior submission and without the permission of the copyright owner of the first journal where it was submitted. Addition of a new title or superfluous changes in the content does not make it a new manuscript. It is recommended that "authors should not submit the same manuscript, in the same or different languages, simultaneously to more than one journal [1]."

Duplicate submission is a problem as it may lead to duplicate publication of the article. Which in turn distort the empirical evidence as other authors doing reviews and meta analyses may erroneously count the evidence twice [3]. Beside it leads to wasting of precious editorial and peer review resources. Leopold SS [4] in his editorial analyzed the impact and noted as to why the duplicate submissions need be

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discouraged. Beside data duplication and wastage of resources, it also violates copyright law and breaks the trust of the readers [4]. Most universities also consider it as academic misconduct and there could be serious implications.

Though the problem of simultaneous submission is big, there is no concrete data available. Most of these cases come to light only when one manuscript is published or if the two manuscripts from two different journals reach the same reviewer. The data on duplicate publication, on the other hand is available and figures are shocking. Cheung et al., [5] studied the prevalence of duplicate submissions in otolaryngology journals and found 75 out of 358 (20.9%) as possible duplicates. On further detailed analysis they found one (0.8%) duplicate publication and 27 (7.5%) being more or less redundant. The duplication rate in the Bailey's series was 1.8% [6].

The authors responsibility and do's and don'ts for the authors have been enumerated numbers of times and are available freely online [1;7-11], hence repeating them here would be redundant. This is also being added to our respective website in 'the instructions to authors'.

Through this consensus statement we the editors once again wish to emphasize that duplicate submission or simultaneous submission is a menace that need be discouraged. The six cases that came to light last year have been suitably investigated and explanations have been called from authors. If it comes to light that this was anything other than a genuine error, the cases will be referred to their respective head of the institutions for investigation and action as per institutional rules. We once again reiterate that the editors will follow a "policy of zero tolerance" for scientific and ethical misconducts. We may publish less but we will publish ethically and will make all attempts to uphold the science and evidence based 'best practice'.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest

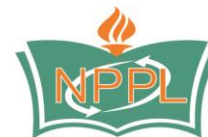
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