

Does Surge in Research Papers Symbolize Good Publication Practice? - A Preliminary Report from India

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Date of Submission: Feb 25, 2013

Date of Acceptance: Mar 31, 2013

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How to cite this article: Tadakamadla J, Kumar S. Does surge in research papers symbolize good publication practice? - A preliminary report from india. *Int J Prev Med* 2013;4:738-9.

DEAR EDITOR,

Publication is considered as the endpoint of research project.^[1] However, authors should respect specific ethical norms that apply to the process of submitting, publishing, and reproducing their manuscripts.^[2] Recently, there has been a sharp upsurge in publications from India in the field of dentistry. This could be attributed to the point system introduced by Dental Council of India for dental teaching faculty in order to become postgraduate teachers which makes publications mandatory. In addition, the scoring system clearly states that 10 points are to be added every 3 years. The scoring system is applicable to all the branches of dentistry including oral medicine and radiology. We have conducted a pilot survey to assess the knowledge and attitudes of oral physicians towards publications ethics. All the dentists (student members and faculty members) registered with Indian Academy of Oral Medicine and Radiology (IAOMR) were e-mailed with a closed-ended 11 item questionnaire along with a request letter. Within a time period of 1 month, 140 subjects responded. A reminder e-mail was sent after a month and 45 responses were received in a month's time again. Only half the participants were aware of terms "like guest, gift, or ghost authorship" and have ever referred International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) guidelines.

Approximately 20% of the participants knew about plagiarism and the responsibilities of corresponding author and more than half of the subjects (65%) supported that limiting the number of authors in an article is a better practice followed by some journals. For the questions related to authorship, 14.3% maintained that funding of the study entitles a person for authorship and 40% believed that a person merely supervising the study should also be included as one of the authors. Majority of the subjects (89%) thought that increased competition and pressure of publication leads to decrease in the quality of outcome. Most of the subjects, 96 and 86% believed that it is mandatory to obtain informed consent before disclosing the identity of the patients and disclosing conflicts of interest, respectively in the process of publishing a paper. However, it was unpromising to observe that 25% subjects thought that publishing findings lacking statistical significance is unimportant and 8.2% accepted that they have submitted similar article to more than one journal simultaneously.

It was also observed that subjects with greater academic experience and number of publications had better attitudes and practices than the other subjects. Though it was noted that 35.4% of the subjects have attended conferences or workshops

on publication ethics, there seems to be a need for conducting workshops and to integrate topics on publication ethics right from undergraduate curriculum. In addition, it is recommended that authors should abide by the publication ethics as research papers reflect the quality of research of a country on an international platform.

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Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.