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Reply

Dear Editor,

The scientific interest the article has generated amongst its readers is indeed welcome.

The establishment of Zika virus as a teratogen is undeniably intimidating. The only way forward to arrest its deadly impact on human health is the establishment of a surveillance system at national level. Entomological surveillance of *Aedes* and monitoring insecticide resistance would be crucial in formulation of effective vector abatement measures. The zealous implementation of vector management strategies, optimization of prediction tools, an alert medical fraternity and very importantly community involvement would all significantly contribute to prevention of outbreaks of dengue, chikungunya or Zika.¹

The authors agree that there is a need to include Zika in the differential diagnosis of “Fever with rash” syndromic approach to not only detect Zika activity in India but to also unravel its epidemiology in our country, if activity is noted.

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Letter to the Editor

Fraud and plagiarism: Important problem in scientific publication



Dear Editor,

We read with great interest both Contemporary issues titled “Plagiarism: a silent epidemic in scientific writing – reasons, recognition and remedies” by Debnath and “Peer review’ for scientific manuscripts: emerging issues, potential threats, and possible remedies” by Das published in *Med J Armed Forces India*. 2016;72:164–167 and 2016;72:172–174.^{1,2} For sure, presently, there are many kinds of misconducts including several forms of plagiarisms, peer review problems as well as others. Focusing on plagiarism in the article, several forms of

plagiarisms are mentioned.¹ Nevertheless, there are also other more complex kinds of plagiarisms and these cannot be easily recognized.^{3,4} Here, the authors would like to give some examples. First, figure plagiarism is an interesting but hard-to-detect kind of plagiarism. In investigative medicine subjects, the copying of picture is possible and it is not uncommon.⁵ This is very hard to detect by simple computational screening tool that mainly detects verbatim copying.³ The second kind of plagiarism is a translational plagiarism. It is also hard to detect this kind of plagiarism. Sometimes, more than one kind of plagiarisms such as combine figure and

translational plagiarism (such as seen that in “Chula Med J. 1980:597-604 [in Thai]⁶”). Our role is to recognize the complex kinds of plagiarisms and we should collaborate to combat these unethical problems. Finally, these kinds of plagiarisms are considered innocent and acceptable ones. Some uncommon kinds of innocent plagiarisms include double publication by agreement of two journals, republication with permission, and accidental erroneous publication by publisher. As an example, the accidental plagiarism caused by the journal can be seen and it is no doubt that this is an innocent plagiarism. Another kind of accepted plagiarism is the double publication in two or more journals of a single article due to the agreement between or among journals for multiple publishing or republishing and there must be a clear statement on that fact in the publication.

To manage the problem should be a more interesting issue. Shafer noted that “plagiarism is ubiquitous⁷” and “you will be caught⁸” if you perform a plagiarism. However, the situation is sometimes very complex. An interesting example is the situation described by Shafer that “what made this decision letter memorable was that I was the senior author. Because decision letters are implicitly directed to all authors, I had just sent myself a decision letter identifying plagiarism in one of my submissions⁷”, which is very impressive and raises some interesting questions in our mind. The first thing is the verification of the detected plagiarism. The plagiarist can be anyone, junior or senior academic person. In this case, there is an interesting question on how to manage the case of plagiarism on the work with multiple authors. The question is “are all authors responsible for the plagiarism?” This is a challenging issue. In general, only the corresponding author has the chance to finally approve the article to complete the submission process. It might require a system to pass the final submitted manuscript to all authors for checking and confirmation before the journal can start the processing of the submitted article. However, there can be more complex situations that some authors might not have a chance to know that he/she was named as author. A good example is the criminal case of plagiarism published in *Hepatitis Monthly*.⁸ In that case, “a doctor submitted plagiarized articles to the journal behind the name of a professor.⁹” Indeed, plagiarism in any form is considered unethical. Although it might be extremely difficult to find (such as figure plagiarism and translational plagiarism) and might not be detected,⁴ it is still considered a problem. Although the others do not know, the plagiarist(s) still know(s). Finally, the question that remains is whether there is any form of plagiarism that is considered innocent. As discussed, self-plagiarism⁶ should not be acceptable and repeated use of the published text by the same author should be avoided. There must be new modifications in writing and presentation with a proper citation and referencing.

Reflecting the mentioned issue on peer reviewing system, the standards and quality control are also needed. To combat this, the fake peer reviewing system has to be set. In a sense,

fake peer reviewing system might be a proposal of fake or disguised reviewer by the submitting authors and this has to be managed as a fraud and it is an actual misconduct.² However, a more interesting issue is on the fake reviewing by some journals in the group of predatory journals. Those journals are not academic at all but try to make money from submitting authors.^{10,11} For sure, there will be no standard in peer reviewing. It should be the role of the academic community to be against those predatory journals. Finally, the important but least mentioned issue is the correspondence and responsibility of the journals to the identified misconducts, frauds and plagiarisms. A good journal is expected to inform the author as well as the author's institute about the possible publication misconduct and also consider notification, retraction and suitable action like imposing sanction on the author as deemed appropriate. The institute might sometimes not respond or do nothing. Of interest, some articles with confirmed textual or figure plagiarisms or self-plagiarisms and identified by Déjà vu database¹² for a long time still exist in the PUBMED (e.g., “*Southeast Asian J Trop Med Public Health*. 2006;37(September (5)):1021-1024¹¹”). But the worst case might be the case that the journal do nothing or support the misconduct or plagiarism.¹¹

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