

## Editorial

### Duplicate Submission and Dual Publication: What Is So Wrong With Them?

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On the surface, there may appear to be little harm in a group of authors submitting similar or identical manuscripts to two journals. Investigators may believe it is their work to disseminate. Should a team of authors that completed an excellent study on the medical management of the surgical patient not get that work in front of the widest possible audience by sending their manuscript to one journal in surgery and one in internal medicine?

No, they should not.

Here are five reasons why:

1. Duplicate publication distorts the literature. Meta-analysis and other forms of synthetic research are major drivers of health policy and medical decision making. If the same data are published multiple times, they risk being counted more than once in these analyses. This artificially inflates treatment effect sizes, usually in favor of newer, more expensive, and less well-proven therapies [4].
2. It often breaks the law. Duplicate publication often results in the violation of copyright. Most journals require authors to sign a transfer of copyright as part of manuscript submission. Once authors sign a transfer of copyright and the manuscript is accepted for publication, the work is no longer the authors' property. They cannot legally give it to another journal. Of course, it remains their property if it is not accepted for publication. Many journals, including *CORR*®, belong to nonprofit societies and many journals do not rely on advertising income. The commercial viability of their intellectual property allows these journals to continue serving physicians, scientists, and, ultimately, patients. Duplicate publication, even of one's own work, is, in this sense, theft.
3. It violates the trust of your readers. Part of what subscribers pay for is originality. Reusing, repurposing, or republishing material from other studies violates readers' reasonable expectations that what they are reading is both important and new. To the degree that duplicate publication is reasonably considered a breach of scientific integrity it also decreases the credibility of those who engage in it.
4. It is considered academic misconduct. University academic promotions committees consider duplicate and redundant publication to be more than bad form. They are right; the practice is misleading and manipulative, and it cheapens the academic mission.
5. Perpetrators often get caught. Reviewers are now—perhaps reasonably—more attuned to this issue. Many journals use electronic tools such as iThenticate® and CrossCheck® to screen submissions for originality. Penalties for duplicate submission can, and do, change the trajectories of investigators' careers. For example, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) recommends sanctions and communication with authors' academic departments for those who engage in dual submissions [1]. At *CORR*®, we endorse COPE's standards.

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There are particular circumstances where secondary publication is acceptable [3]. Common examples include translations, when identified as translations of previously published work, and when done with appropriate permissions; republication of abstracts, with permission and usually with an explicitly articulated purpose for the dual use; and guidelines from governmental or professional sources, when permission from all involved has been obtained. Transparency is the common element in all such legitimate forms of secondary publication.

We do not consider publication of full-length manuscripts previously presented as abstracts or posters at professional meetings to be duplicate publication. We are in good company on this point; this exception was specifically articulated in the first discussion on the topic of which I am aware, written more than 40 years ago [2].

To be clear, *CORR*®, like most journals, requires copyright transfer at the time of manuscript submission. Similar to most journals, we require authors who submit manuscripts to sign a cover letter stating that the article “has not been submitted or accepted for publication

elsewhere (in whole or in part, including patients, data, or results, without acknowledgment)” and to certify that the authors have not assigned any right or interest in the manuscript to any third party.

The quality of the literature we use to guide the care of our patients depends on the integrity of the individuals who make those affirmations.

## References

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