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LETTER TO EDITOR

Let's avoid unwanted plagiarism

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Dear Editor

Drafting a scientific paper is both challenging and exciting. A paper reports our findings to scholars and contributes to application of the findings (1). Unfortunately, a number of universities have recently encountered problems in publishing papers in the wake of the neglects of authors at the time of drafting the papers. As most of these mistakes are committed unintentionally, recommendations are made to consult experienced professors to prevent such errors. The correct drafting of a research project is another point that should be considered by a researcher (2). Plagiarism is one of these major problems faced by young researchers. Plagiarism occurs when someone cites some author's statements without any reference to the author or without any quotation marks used to denote citation. Plagiarism gains importance as any piece of text holds a specific meaning brought by a certain author; hence, the significance of the text lies with its author. If fidelity is not observed, the significance of the statement is impaired. To prevent plagiarism, it is recommended to refer to the original reference if a group of at least seven words are used literally from it and enclose the citation in quotation marks. One of the simplest ways to avoid plagiarism is to write statements in one's own words. In this latter case, you just have to mention the source, and there is no need to use quotation marks. You should notice that citation from a previous work of yours without reference and quotation marks is also forbidden; this is referred to as self-plagiarism.

There are software applications that can locate plagiarism in papers, especially papers written in English. This type of software has been developed to work for Persian papers as well (3,4). Since a significant number of papers are written collaboratively by both professors and students in surgical fields, the drafting of papers is occasionally defused to the students because of the limited time available to professors. Nonetheless, as students are less experienced, their citations may be improper, leading to plagiarism. Therefore, it is suggested that supervisors and advisers in surgical departments check the papers drafted by students both scientifically and literarily. Collectively, perhaps more important than anything in our opinion, is adherence to codes of ethics and professional writing by authors.

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