■ Letter

Plagiarism: Challenges and Criteria

Viroj Wiwanitkit*

Visiting professor, Hainan Medical University, Haikou, China

To the Editor

I read the editorial titled “The detection of plagiarism” with great interest.¹⁾ It is noted that “Faced with this challenge, the editorial board of our journal has decided to introduce CrossCheck. Similar to the case of the Croatian Medical Journal,²⁾ the plagiarism detection procedure consists of automatic scanning of manuscripts using the software (CrossCheck) and manual verification of manuscripts suspected of having been plagiarized (more than 10% text similarity).”¹⁾ In fact, plagiarism is a major ethical issue in academic writing, and the problem is very common worldwide. The role of a journal in screening and managing plagiarism in the submitted articles is very important. However, the main method used to identify plagiarism in text utilizes an electronic tool. This involves the identification of verbatim repetitions of text. Nevertheless, plagiarism can be more complex than such simple text repetitions. Such forms of plagiarism include picture/figure, translation, and conceptual plagiarisms, which cannot be detected by simple computational plagiarism screening tools. As noted by Lykkesfeldt, “plagiarism software offers a unique opportunity to screen for plagiarism easily but also that it has to be employed with caution as automated or uncritical use is far too unreliable to allow a fair basis for judging the degree of plagiarism in a manuscript.”²⁾ Sometimes, complex, combined types of plagiarism can also be seen in publications, and it is very difficult to detect such types, for example, a combination of translational and figure plagiarisms with modifications.³⁾

The next concern is regarding the percentage of similarity. It is quite possible that the same idea may occur to more than one authors. However, in this case, the interesting consideration is the level of similarity in ideas that is acceptable in academic writing. Although some practitioners use the rule of ‘5% or 10%’ or ‘100 words,’ it remains a topic of debate.⁴⁾ It is argued that a good article should have 0% or no plagiarism, but this might be an ideal case. It is the duty of the journal to verify and judge the ‘intention’ of an accused plagiarism. To fulfill the criteria of plagiarism, the ‘intention to steal and no disclosure’ is the main action of the plagiarist.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

REFERENCES

1. Kim SY. The detection of plagiarism. *Korean J Fam Med* 2017;38:1.
2. Lykkesfeldt J. Strategies for using plagiarism software in the screening of incoming journal manuscripts: recommendations based on a recent literature survey. *Basic Clin Pharmacol Toxicol* 2016;119:161-4.
3. Wiwanitkit V. Letter to the editor: Plagiarism screening by the journal: is there still any pitfall? *Account Res* 2015;22:198-9.
4. Bazdaric K. Plagiarism detection: quality management tool for all scientific journals. *Croat Med J* 2012;53:1-3.

Received: February 23, 2017, Accepted: March 3, 2017

*Corresponding Author: Viroj Wiwanitkit Tel: +6624132436, Fax: +6624132436, E-mail: wviroj@yahoo.com