

Publication Ethics

As you seek to publish, it is critical to become familiar with issues surrounding publication ethics and plagiarism. While the topic of publication ethics covers a range of topics, the ones that are most relevant to this program include plagiarism and authorship. Fraudulent publication is an umbrella term that addresses publication ethics. The box below includes the definition of publication as cited by PHS and DHHS. Much more information on this topic is available at the Nurse Author & Editor site, as well as the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) publicationethics.org

Fraudulent publication

Misconduct in science means fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation. PHS, 1989, p 32449, DHHS

Note this includes plagiarism alongside pure fabrication. Also note the last sentence allows for some honest errors. However, if another author claims you have either plagiarized or misquoted their work, an investigation will ensue. If it is determined that you duplicated another's work, your article will be retracted from the literature. It should go without saying that you NEVER make anything up (results of a project, numbers of participants, a reference, etc.) or plagiarize.

So, what exactly does plagiarism involve? Here is a brief list of relevant actions:

- Taking intellectual property of others
- Taking credit for others' work
- Self-plagiarism

Notice the last bullet, which is mentioned briefly in discussing multiple manuscripts. All of this is easily avoided. When in doubt, reference or cite it. But never copy anyone's work. And realize that the responsibility lies with the author. This means we must be extremely careful when using assistants to help with a literature search, editing, etc.

Publishers routinely submit ALL manuscripts to plagiarism software.

The use of plagiarism software happens before a manuscript is sent to the peer reviewers. It identifies overlap with direct quotes, very slightly paraphrased content, etc. from other published material. There is no specific percentage of overlap that is acceptable. To some degree, editors decide based on what the overlap involves and how it is cited. But it is always best to synthesize the thoughts and works of others, so that you can express it in your own words before writing it. Paraphrasing goes well beyond changing a verb, switching

from passive to active form, etc. There is also a range of plagiarism software that authors can use if they want to test their content before submission. Ideally, just avoid errors.

Quoting Carefully

How do you quote carefully?

Whenever possible, quote from the primary source—read the primary source to ensure your quote and the context is correct. If primary source is unavailable, quote the secondary source, confirming its use in the secondary source and context.

READ the full publication being cited—not just the quoted passage. A direct quote may have one meaning seen alone that is totally inaccurate to the original context of the overall publication. Compare the quote to ensure you are not abbreviating or missing words. If you replace a phrase with ellipses in a long quotation, confirm the words omission does not change the context or meaning. Do not cite a quotation that includes ellipses for this reason.

Handling Reproduced Works

It is important to properly handle reproduced works, such as existing tables, figures, photos, and boxes without permission. This is a step beyond citing the source, requiring that you obtain permission from the original publisher to use the piece in your publication. Also realize that you cannot lift images/photos from the internet without ensuring they are license-free. If you find a proprietary, licensed photo that you think illustrates your topic well, visit sites such as Pexels and Pixabay to see if a similar license-free image can be obtained. NEVER include an image of a famous person or licensed photo without permission.

Unethical Publication Issues Are Not Rare

There are a couple of very informative sites that give a window into the publishing world and illustrate how common publication ethic issues are. Some ethical issues you will see on these sites are unforgiveable and egregious acts. I have known and been surprised when someone with whom I'm familiar gets caught in this trap. Please just visit each of these sites and look at the Nurse Author & Editor site, searching on publication ethics.

- retractionwatch.com
 - Tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process
- publicationethics.org
 - Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)

Authorship

Authorship is among the issues of publication ethics. Issues over authorship are not rare in team writing projects. There are authors and there are non-authors who simply provided some level of support for the author's efforts.

For example, a faculty member who merely approves your topic, graded the paper with feedback, and encouraged its publication IS NOT an author. Years ago, it was expected that if any student published a paper where the faculty member chaired the committee or reviewed the manuscript, that faculty person was an author. That is completely unethical. Period. While I cannot imagine it still happens, it is possible. But no one who shares references with you, reviews your manuscript, or even helps format it, is an author.

What level of contribution is necessary for authorship? The following bullets summarize the requirements. There are several articles on Nurse Author & Editor on this topic; I have cited three interesting ones below, including Ray-Burrue, who writes about having been omitted from the list of authors after substantial contributions. Authorship issues (or failure to be recognized as author) may only arise once a publication is posted—at which the time an individual becomes aware they are not listed. Most manuscript submission portals have extensive questions to identify relevant authors. Complaints are followed up and investigated by an editor as they arise.

Author should be able to accept responsibility for and defend work

Authorship* is based on substantial contributions:

- Initial idea, analysis, synthesis, interpretation
- Drafting and/or revising intellectual content
- Final manuscript approval

*An acknowledgement is appropriate for people who provided other types of support (financial, editorial, etc.)

Hein, L. and Chinn, P. (2017), Issues of Authorship: Who and in What Order?. Nurse Author & Editor, 27: 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-4910.2017.tb00251.x>

Kennedy, M.S. (2015), Inappropriate Authorship in Nursing Journals. Nurse Author & Editor, 25: 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-4910.2015.tb00565.x>

Ray-Barruel, G. (2010), Authorial Agreements: Get it in writing before you do the work!. Nurse Author & Editor, 20: 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-4910.2010.tb00108.x>