

# Guest Editorial

## Plagiarism: An Intimidating Challenge in Scientific Discourse

Plagiarism is an act of deceit on scientific or literary fronts. This often involves stealing a concept or feat without crediting or acknowledging the original source which would therefore violate and infringe statutes, like copyright and intellectual property rights. Literary and scientific documents are so vital in the quest to pursue art forms and research, conversing scientific knowledge and to plan future explorations.

Plagiarism is derived from the Latin word 'Plagiarius' meaning abducting or marauding. With the advent of internet and digital technology and heightened competition among researchers, it has now risen to alarming proportions. Mostly, it is seen as 'intentional' or 'overt' where someone else's achievement is projected as own accomplishment or as in 'misinterpreting the paraphrases' which is a restatement of a text or passage. Occasionally, it is defended as 'unintentional', though both invite similar judicial disposals.

Publication of scientific work is a part of postgraduate curriculum or doctoral program in all disciplines of science and is gauged as an index of peer recognition and acceptance. The consequences of plagiarism are sweeping; with loss of personal/professional reputation, moral indictment and legal/monetary ramifications. 'Stature' or 'ignorance' does not come to the rescue of the accused in a court of law. Further, plagiarized research places the investigators at an abysmal low with cynicism among peers. Awareness has to come up among students and professionals, in the academia, clinical and industrial sector against the ill-effects of plagiarism. A good peer-review process is a strong watch-dog against plagiarism. Our national journals need to rope in 'sound checks' to assuage plagiarism so as to be at par to international standards. Though plagiarism is technically dealt in the lines of 'copyright violations,' scholastic dishonesty would impose more of a moral offence than legal insinuation. It may also bid public confession, loss of research funding, professional standing and job positions. Therefore, it would be pragmatic for all concerned to put joint efforts to wipe out the rot.

In this connection, efforts of UGC to curb plagiarism are encouraging. Two mandatory publications for every thesis of PhD degree from Indian universities would show case and expose achievements of higher education institutes and bring accountability to their charter. Armed forces have perfected a unique way of conducting research activities through the prestigious annual Armed Forces Medical Research Committee (AFMRC) projects. A multi-tier evaluation system with adequate controls for these projects precludes scientific duplication significantly and is worth emulating by national, state and private health agencies. The importance of keeping plagiarism out of research and scientific publications warrants no highlighting and testimony in the development of the country in general and health care system in particular.

**Lt General Vimal Arora, VSM & Bar, PHDS**  
Director General Dental Services &  
Colonel Commandant Army Dental Corps  
Hon Dental Surgeon to the President of India