

Anecdote from Editors Desk

Anecdote 1- Image Tampering

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In this over-a-decade journey of JCDR, there have been quite a number of incidences that are worthy enough to be recorded in ink. This is because, not only we count these as our experiences but think that once made public, these instances would also help other editorial bodies also. Indeed, COPE has a larger body of similar literature. Geographical distinctions occur due to variety of author behaviour and different author-editor relationships. So, we thought of releasing a series of editorial wherein we would diary our experiences, one at a time, related to either unusual conflicts, out of the ordinary author requests, plagiarism of a singular variety etc. Along with these we would also add on how the JCDR editorial acted or resolved the matter.

We would appreciate any inputs from other editors or readers having similar experience or if they would like to share their thoughts on it.

ANECDOTE 1- IMAGE TAMPERING

Introduction

There was a time when photographs were considered to be evidences of a deed, both in print and media. But in modern times, their reliability are in question because of the tampering, an easy task to do, courtesy the imaging software. In the biomedical field of research publications, images related to research (graphical presentations, photomicrographs, clinical presentation of pathologies etc.) are tampered to present them favorably.

The Act

Minor modifications or editing, to improve the contrast or clarity is acceptable but morphing the images to the extent of manipulating the research finding, is way too far than what can be considered ethical. JCDR received an article which included ulcerative lesions, shown to have disappeared post treatment. This case report was accepted for publication and during copy editing one of the image was found to be morphed. The follow-up image showed the mucosa to be healed. In reality, this second image (follow up) was a mere morphed version of the first one.

The Decision

On communication with the head of the department (who was one of the author), he claimed that he had not seen the article before submission and agreed to the misconduct. The HOD, however assured us that the event did happen and the patient was lost on follow-up. Since the report was that of a rare iatrogenic lesion, we choose to record the event in literature; but changed the article type and format into 'Letter to Editor'. A note on the author behavior was made for future editorial reference.

Quite a number of morphing detection tools have come up but are not embraced by many journals or publishers. It is time to give equal importance to image tampering as we give to text plagiarism.

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