

Raising Rogue Authors: Urgent Need of a Training Program on Publication Ethics

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Dear Editor,

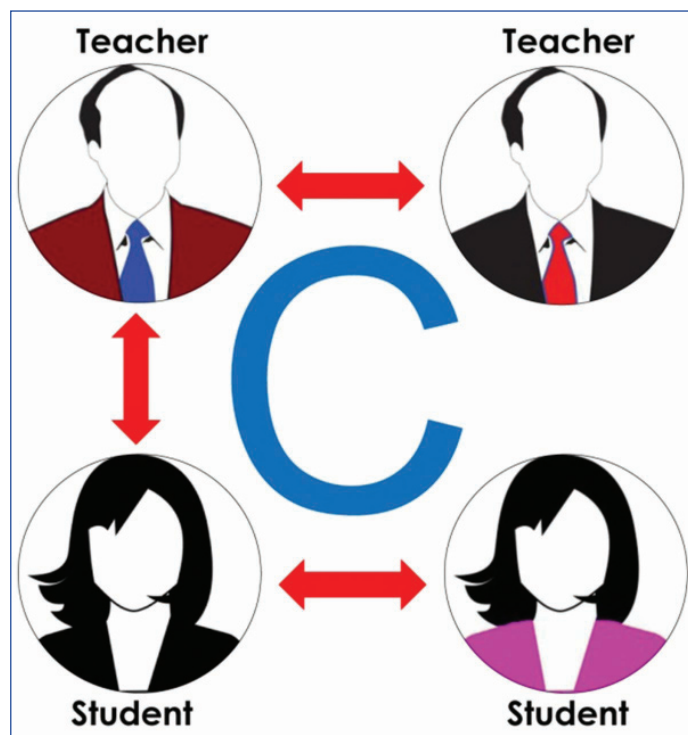
We read with great interest an editorial contributed by Das S et al., in the October, 2017 issue of your journal [1]. The series of cases of authorship conflict between teachers and students was interesting and thought provoking. The editorial purposefully extracted only the cases between teacher and student in connection with the publication of thesis work. In this context, we would like to share some of our views with the journal readers.

Mandatory publication for the promotion of medical teachers may be a potential reason behind innumerable papers published from India. The majority of these papers are being published in predatory journals [2]. Authors may be in a hurry to publish the paper and predatory open access journals are preying on them. For publication within a short span of time, there must be a bypass. In many a cases, the thesis may be considered that bypass. Publication in limited time may not allow first-time authors (also experienced authors) to consider the ethical issues that may arise in future.

For medical postgraduate courses, Medical Council of India suggests that a student must “present one research paper which should be published/accepted for publication/sent for publication” [3]. Commonly, the thesis is submitted in the final year of studentship. After submission of thesis, if the student prepares a paper and submits it to a journal for publication, it may take a long time to get it published after rounds of peer reviews and revisions. Hence, students may also take a previously submitted thesis and engage in publication of a subset of data, without offering authorship to the original researcher (whose thesis it was). This creates conflict among students and residents.

In a multidisciplinary dissertation work, co-guides often play a substantial role in guiding the student [1]. For publication of data from the thesis with co-guides, any one of the teacher can publish the data without informing the other contributing teacher. Hence, the authorship conflicts may occur between teachers in thesis publication.

Thus, along with conflicts between teachers and students, conflicts may arise amongst teachers, and students. In this context, we made a “C loop” of possible conflicts as shown in [Table/Fig-1].



[Table/Fig-1]: Possible conflicts among teachers and students in publication of thesis data.

Though, publication is an important aspect of a postgraduate student, publication ethics are rarely taught in post graduation course. For promotion of medical teachers, publications are mandatory nowadays. Hence, for both these groups of audience, a training program on publication ethics is the need of the hour.

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