

Quotation or plagiarism?

Citação ou plágio?

¿Cita o plagio?

In all areas of human knowledge, especially those that produce information, researchers support their assertions by referring to the scientific methods and the results obtained by their peers, and quoting primarily authors with solid intellectual findings that have been published in renowned publications.

Technological advancement in information science has provided extraordinary benefits to scientific journals. This can be observed in the high quality standards of journals that are indexed in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) database. Evaluation committees are increasingly rigorous with regard to specific requirements, an attitude which denotes excellence and merits applause. However, this advancement has given rise to a growing problem in the context of scientific or academic production: plagiarism.

The "copy and paste" practice has become so common that it is now a matter of great concern to advisors and evaluators in teaching and research activities. Some institutions are already taking measures to prevent the practice. In August 2011, for instance, the Capes Foundation released guidelines for fighting plagiarism. A growing movement among editors has been undertaken to preserve the quality of their journals. Journals have developed screening mechanisms that rely on traditional search engines, such as Google, or have even acquired specific programs that detect plagiarism. The dissemination of these tools has been extensive; the topic of plagiarism has aroused discussion in leading journals, including *The Lancet*, on the use of these tools for preserving the originality of manuscripts.

Although the *Revista Pan-Amazônica de Saúde (RPAS)* is an emergent periodical, its Editorial Board is strict with regard to plagiarism. Moreover, as the Executive Editor, my obligation is to reinforce the rigor with which we analyze submissions. Our analysis is based on the manuscripts submitted to RPAS in which the author incorrectly cites previous research, thus unintentionally committing plagiarism. In other cases, the author deliberately transcribes paragraphs, and even entire pages, from other works. Other submissions include paragraphs from several articles with no mention of their source.

The number of problematic works submitted to RPAS is high, which forces the Editorial Board to assign a professional to the task of detecting plagiarism. Hopefully, this measure will ensure that articles with plagiarism are not published. However, in all fairness, we are not free from experiencing circumstances similar to those described in the piece titled, "USP fires professor for research plagiarism," which was published in *Folha de São Paulo*.

It is very important that everyone, including editors, authors, advisors and students, be cautious about reproducing or accepting the transcription of excerpts by other authors. Extra care will avoid embarrassment and even legal action, both of which would harm the editor, the offending author, and principally the original intellectual author whose ideas were usurped. In the case of litigation, even if no bad faith is found and there is room for retraction, the involved parties still experience moral, professional, and financial damage.

Writing is an art, and one's style is personal. However, the scientific style demands appropriate language, clear logic, and the observance of basic rules. The most important rule is to respect the truth, both in the results reached by the authors and in the use of previous studies in their own research. It is on the search of truth that the construction of human knowledge is based; without it, science is destroyed by suspicion and discredit.

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