



Authorship misusing in scientific publications

Zloupotreba autorstva u naučnim publikacijama

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Research results publishing is “the end that adorns an act” of every scientific research, because only published results can influence the development of the applicable scientific field. Due to this, the authors of the published articles are especially appreciated in scientific and professional associations. Most often, it is also the basis for the assessment of scientific contribution of individual researcher and used for his/her advancement in the academic and scientific community by providing him/her a better social and financial status in this way. Therefore, researchers tend to publish more papers, preferably in journals indexed in the renowned databases of scientific publications since the status of the scientific journals is an indirect indicator of the value of articles published in them, and consequently the authors of these articles.

To achieve this goal, some authors resort to a variety of abuses. About plagiarism (download complete or parts of other people's work and their publication under his/her own name) and selfplagiarism (multiple publication of the same or slightly altered his/her own article) as a way of authorship misuse or abuse and ways for their detection and prevention has been already written in our Journal¹⁻⁴. However, by far the most common authorship misuse refers to the so-called undeserved or gift authorship, i.e. including in the byline persons which do not participate in the research realization. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in scientific publications in the field of biomedicine that, very often, especially in recent times, have a growing number of authors. Sometimes, it can be justified, for example, in the case of publishing the results of large clinical multicenter, and, often, multinational studies, but usually this is not the case. For example, in biomedical journals, such is the “Vojnosanitetski preglad” (VSP), articles befalling to the category Case report, often have more than six authors who, judging by their affiliations, are apparently unrelated to their topic.

Undeserved authorship is not, unfortunately, the exclusivity of the so-called “small” scientific communities, such as

Publikovanje rezultata istraživanja predstavlja „konac koji delo krase“ svakog naučnog i stručnog rada jer samo onda kada su objavljeni oni mogu da utiču na razvoj naučne oblasti na koju se odnose. Zbog toga se autorstvo objavljenih radova posebno ceni u naučnim i stručnim krugovima. Najčešće, ono je i osnov za procenu naučnog doprinosa pojedinog istraživača i služi za njegovo napredovanje u akademskoj i naučnoj zajednici obezbeđujući mu, na taj način, bolji društveni i materijalni status. Zbog toga naučni i akademski radnici nastoje objaviti što više radova, po mogućnosti, u časopisima indeksiranim u poznatim bazama naučne publicistike jer status naučnog časopisa predstavlja indirektan pokazatelj i vrednosti radova objavljenih u njima, a time i autora tih radova.

U postizanju ovog cilja, pojedini autori pribegavaju različitim zloupotrebama. O plagijarizmu (preuzimanje celog ili delova tuđeg rada i njihovo publikovanje pod svojim imenom) i autoplagijarizmu (višestruko publikovanje istog ili neznatno izmenjenog sopstvenog rada) kao načinu zloupotrebe autorstva i načinima za njihovu detekciju i sprečavanje već je pisano na stranicama ovog časopisa¹⁻⁴. Međutim, daleko najčešći način zloupotrebe autorstva odnosi se na tzv. nezasluzeno ili poklonjeno autorstvo (engl. *undeserved* ili *gift authorship*), tj. dopisivanje imena pojedinog istraživača u radovima u čijoj realizaciji nije ni učestvovao. Ova pojava posebno je izražena u naučnim publikacijama iz oblasti biomedicine koji, vrlo često, pogotovo u poslednje vreme, imaju sve veći broj autora. Ponekad je to i opravdano, npr. u slučaju objavljivanja rezultata velikih kliničkih multicentričnih, neretko i multinacionalnih studija, ali najčešće to nije slučaj, pa tako i na radovima iz kategorije Prikaz slučaja, često bude navedeno i više od šest autora koji, kada se pogledaju njihove afilijacije, očito nemaju nikakve veze sa temom rada.

Nezasluzeno autorstvo nije, nažalost, ekskluzivitet samo „malih“ naučnih sredina, poput naše, već je, sudeći po napsima u časopisima iz različitih naučnih oblasti, rašireno širom

ours, but, according to articles in journals in different scientific fields, is spread around the world⁵⁻⁷. Most often it is justified by friendly and collegial reasons, although, basically, the main reason for this is the common interest of the author and coauthors ("I'll add your name and you'll add mine"), followed by family reasons (a common occurrence among the authors of the same last name), but there are cases of assigning authorship to supervisors or persons who are expected some help, sometimes without their knowledge, in order to achieve certain benefits. However, there are cases of involuntary adding an author, when the author, mostly junior researcher, does it so due to the insistence of his mentor or leading senior researcher, fearing of adverse consequences for his/her status and even denial of authorship if not doing so^{7,8}.

For a long time in the academic and scientific community, the ways to prevent the appearance of undeserved authorship have been discussed. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), also known as the Vancouver Group, made a guideline for preparation of manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals in which, among other things, there are the criteria that has to be fulfilled by a researcher to be included among the authors of scientific article⁹. According to this document the authorship belongs only to those who significantly contribute to all phases of research and preparation of a manuscript for publication: "1) substantial contributions to the conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; 3) final approval to the version to be published". Other collaborators in the research who do not fulfill these criteria are usually mentioned in the Acknowledgements section. The exception are some studies which require a specific profile of professionals (e.g. biostatistician, epidemiologist and pathologist) who, though they do not participate in all the three phases of a scientific work realization, can be listed as authors, if it is estimated that their engagement in the study is not a part of their routine engagement.

In an effort to raise as much a prestige of the VSP and harmonize its editing into line with international standards for biomedical journals the Editorial Board of the Journal, from the beginning of the next year, will demand that all authors (if there are two or more) of the manuscripts submitted to the VSP Editorial Office, to sign a statement of his/her contribution to the work (Authorship statement) that will be published at the end of the article under the heading "Author contributions". We hope it will be the way to reduce the number of "false" authors and that only the names of those who, through their creative, intellectual efforts actually contribute to the realization of scientific work will be listed in the byline.

Another novelty refers to the requirement to sign the statement by each author declaring any potential conflict of interest (Statement of conflicts of interest), which will also, starting from January 2013, be a part of the documentation required in submitting manuscripts to the VSP Editorial Office. This statement is very important for assessing the reliability of the results presented in the paper, if it is found that among the authors there are those who receive honoraria, paid trips to professional meetings, apparatus or reagents

sveta⁵⁻⁷. Najčešće se ono opravdava drugarskim i kolegijalnim razlozima, premda se, u osnovi, radi o zajedničkim interesima autora i koautura ("ja ću dopisati tebe, a ti mene"), zatim rodbinskim razlozima (česta je pojava istih prezimena među autorima), a ima slučajeva stavljanja na rad nadređenih ili osoba od kojih se očekuje neka pomoć, ponekad i bez njihovog znanja, sa ciljem ostvarenja određenih beneficija. Međutim, postoje i slučajevi nedobrovoljnog dopisivanja koautora, kada autor, najčešće mladi istraživač, to čini na insistiranje svog mentora ili rukovodioca projekta, bojeći se neželjenih posljedica po svoj status, pa čak i oduzimanja autorstva, ukoliko to ne učini^{7,8}.

Već duže vreme u akademskim i naučnim krugovima vode se rasprave o načinima sprečavanja pojave nezaslužnog autorstva. Internacionalni komitet urednika medicinskih časopisa (*International Committee of Medical Journal Editors* – ICMJE), poznat i kao Vankuverska grupa, izradio je svojevrstni vodič za pripremu rukopisa koji se podnose redakcijama biomedicinskih časopisa u kome je, između ostalog, precizirano koje kriterijume mora da zadovolji istraživač da bi mogao biti uvršten među autore naučnog i stručnog članka⁹. Prema ovom dokumentu autorstvo rada pripada samo onima koji su značajno doprineli u svim fazama tokom istraživanja i pripreme rada za objavljivanje: 1) izradi koncepta i dizajna eksperimenta, prikupljanju podataka, odnosno njihovoj analizi i interpretaciji; 2) pisanju prve verzije članka ili kritičkoj reviziji najvažnijih delova rukopisa; 3) davanju saglasnosti na završnu verziju rada koja će se predati za publikovanje. Ostali saradnici na radu koji ne ispunjavaju sve gorenavedene kriterijume obično se navode u sekciji Zahvalnost (engl. *Acknowledgment*). Izuzetak predstavljaju neke studije za koje je neophodan određeni profil stručnjaka (npr. biostatističar, patolog ili epidemiolog) koji, iako nisu učestvovali u sve tri faze u realizaciji jednog naučnog rada, mogu biti navedeni kao autori, ako se proceni da njihovo angažovanje u istraživanju nije deo njihovog rutinskog rada.

U nastojanjima da što više podigne ugled časopisa i njegovo uređivanje uskladi sa međunarodnim standardima za biomedicinske časopise Uredništvo „Vojnosanitetskog pregleda“ od početka naredne godine zahtevaće da svi autori (ukoliko ih je dva ili više) radova dostavljenih redakciji časopisa potpišu izjavu o svom doprinosu radu (*Authorship statement*) koja će biti objavljena na kraju članka u rubrici „Doprinos autora“ (*Author contributions*). Nadamo se da će na taj način broj „lažnih“ autora biti smanjen i da će samo imena onih koji su svojim kreativnim, intelektualnim naporima stvarno doprineli realizaciji naučnog rada biti navedena u spisku autora.

Druga novost odnosi se na zahtev za potpisivanje izjave o postojanju ili ne konflikta interesa (*Statement of conflicts of interest*) koji će, takođe, od januara 2013. godine biti obavezan deo dokumentacije prilikom podnošenja rukopisa u redakciju našeg časopisa. Tu izjavu potpisuju svi autori i ona je veoma važna za ocenu pouzdanosti rezultata prezentovanih u radu, ukoliko se ustanovi da među autorima ima onih koji su dobijali honorare, plaćena putovanja na stručne skupove, aparate ili reagensne od određenih firmi.

gifts from certain companies.

Deserved authorship and transparency of data on the sources of funding research are definitely a *conditio sine qua non* of ethics in publishing. Therefore, we believe that the introduction of this novelties in the editorial policy of the VSP will contribute to the efforts to establish the right values in scientific publishing and science, in general.

Zaslужeno autorstvo i transparentnost podataka o izvorima finansiranja istraživača svakako predstavljaju *conditio sine qua non* etike u publikovanju. Zbog toga verujemo da ćemo uvođenjem ovih novina u uređivačkoj politici "Vojnosanitetskog pregleda" doprineti naporima za uspostavljanje pravih vrednosti u naučnoj publicistici i nauci, uopšte.

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