Notice of Duplicate Publication

Two articles with nearly identical data have recently been published in Stroke1 and in Pacing And Clinical Electrophysiology (PACE).2 Except for minor variations, the articles are identical and have the same figures.

The policy of Stroke and the American Heart Association (AHA) concerning duplicate publication is clearly stated in “Instructions to Authors,” and authors of accepted papers are required to sign a statement that includes, “I verify that the work submitted has not been published and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, in whole or in part, with the exception of abstracts of not more than 400 words.” In addition, once an AHA journal accepts a paper for publication, all authors must sign a Copyright Transfer Agreement that includes the agreement that “All accepted works become the property of the AHA and may not be published elsewhere without prior written permission from the AHA. Authors may use part of the work (e.g., tables and figures) in subsequent works without requesting permission from the AHA.”

Readers of primary-source periodicals deserve to be able to trust that what they are reading is original unless there is a clear statement that the article is being republished by the choice of the authors and editor. Because of limited pages and the need to maintain only the highest quality and original material, most peer-reviewed journals require the authors to agree and verify that the work submitted has not been published and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere in whole or in part, with the exception of short abstracts.

For these reasons, Stroke has an obligation to its readers to publish a notice of duplicate publication to explain why a paper published in Stroke was almost simultaneously published in another journal and to caution authors and readers that duplicate publication violates the policies of peer-reviewed medical journals. Authors should take great care to keep editors informed of any situations that might potentially violate this policy.

The Stroke article was received on January 6, 1998, and on January 15, 1998, the first author signed a statement that the work submitted had not been published and was not under consideration for publication elsewhere, in whole or in part. After revision, Stroke accepted the paper for publication on August 24, 1998. The authors signed a Copyright Agreement on July 25, 1998.

The stimulus for the apparent duplication was that the authors had accepted an invitation to present a paper at the proceedings of the Congress, Cardiostim ‘98, held in Nice in June 1998. As part of this Congress, they were requested to submit a manuscript for publication in a supplement of PACE, and they did so in June 1998. PACE did not require a statement verifying that the work submitted had not been published and was not under consideration for publication elsewhere. Therefore, there was no direction to the authors about the duplication of the papers from PACE. By the time the papers were accepted and processed, the work copyrighted to Stroke was published in PACE almost the same week.

Although this instance clearly requires a notice of duplicate publication for the reasons noted, the authors state this was not their intent and it was a consequence of “an unintended and unusual succession of events.” Their response follows. Regardless, we are obligated to note the duplicate publication of the paper and make the very strong statement that such duplication is not acceptable for papers submitted to or published in Stroke.

Mark L. Dyken, MD
Editor-in-Chief

Response

We are grateful for the opportunity to explain and comment on this episode.

We do agree that duplicate submission and subsequent duplicate publication of a scientific paper must be avoided with care by authors. However, in this specific circumstance, we believe that the apparent duplicate publication of our manuscript has occurred as a consequence of an unintended and unusual succession of events. In January 1998 our paper1 was submitted for publication in Stroke, and as necessary we clearly stated that the work had not been previously published and was not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

While the Stroke publication process continued, we were invited to present our scientific work at the Cardiostim ‘98 Congress and submit a manuscript for possible publication in a Cardiostim supplement to the journal PACE. We decided to submit for publication in PACE2 essentially the same version of the manuscript already being considered by Stroke. As the editors of the PACE supplement did not require any statement about previous publication or submission elsewhere in whole or on part of our paper, we disregarded their statement in “Instructions for Authors” and the copyright statement we had signed for Stroke and mistakenly submitted the manuscript.

In August 1998, after revision, the original manuscript was finally accepted for publication in Stroke and shortly thereafter, the manuscript was also accepted for publication in PACE. We did not try to stop either, though we did not intend to publish the same article twice, especially as we no longer controlled publication after signing the Stroke copyright agreement.

Unexpectedly, both papers were almost simultaneously published in Stroke and in the PACE supplement at the end of 1998. Obviously, we did not intend to publish the same article twice, as we know the scientific prohibitions published in PACE and Stroke— which are also understood and accepted in general in medical publication—as well as the scientific relevance of both journals, and the regrettable nature of such behavior. However, we can say that we were just anxious to see our original data divulged to the scientific community.
We apologize for any inconvenience that we may have caused to Stroke, as well as to PACE, especially in front of their qualified readers. However, we hope that you will consider our good faith in the circumstance.

Fabrizio Ammirati, MD
Furio Colivicchi, MD
Giancarlo Di Battista, MD
Fausto Fiume Garelli, MD
Massimo Santini, MD, FACC

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