

# Issues in Publication Ethics of *Healthcare Informatics Research* since 2010

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## I. Introduction

*Healthcare Informatics Research* (HIR) has been published four times a year since 2010, and the importance of publication ethics is increasingly emphasized. As the number of papers submitted have been increasing and submissions are made by authors from various countries, threats related to publishing ethics also have been increasing. In this report, I would like to take the opportunity to review the cases of violations of the publication ethics of HIR. A total of five cases of publication ethics violation were reported. A majority of ethical issues in the publication since 2010 were related to duplicate publications.

## II. Cases with Ethical Violation

### Case 1: Duplicate Publication in Two Different Journals

A group of authors submitted a manuscript to HIR. During the review process, a reviewer reported to the editor that this manuscript had already been published in another journal. On further investigation, the editorial office found that the

authors submitted a manuscript to HIR and then submitted a manuscript with very similar contents to a different engineering journal.

The Publication Ethics Committee of HIR judged this case to be an attempt of duplicate publication. Submission of manuscripts was prohibited for the next 2 years by all authors of this manuscript.

### Case 2: Thesis Publication without Acknowledgement

An author group submitted a manuscript to HIR, and it was published in HIR after the regular peer review process. However, this manuscript was the master's degree thesis of the first author. The editorial office requires this to be included in the acknowledgement section along with citation information, for example, "The results of this work were included in the thesis for the Master of Medicine by John Doe of the Graduate School of John Doe University."

The Publication Ethics Committee of HIR judged that the authors had violated the author's guidelines. As this was not considered a major violation, the Editorial Board decided to publish a corrigendum that informed readers that this article was a thesis for a master's degree. The authors were charged with the actual cost required to publish the corrigendum.

### Case 3: Paper Presented in a Conference Proceeding

Inquiries were received about the suspicion that one article published in the former form of HIR, the *Journal of Korean Society of Medical Informatics* (JKOSMI), was a duplicate publication of an article of the China-Japan-Korea Joint Symposium on Medical Informatics (CJKMI) proceedings, with different corresponding authors.

The Publication Ethics Committee of HIR judged that this

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manuscript did not violate the internal publication ethics because proceedings are not regarded as a journal papers in the fields of HIR (also JKOSMI). The editors of JKOSMI were recommending this, and some articles were published in JKOSMI after improvement with correction or modification, after being published in CJKMI proceedings. Unfortunately, however, the authors did not cite their CJKMI proceeding articles appropriately. Moreover, according to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), “The corresponding author is the one individual who takes primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the manuscript submission, peer review, and publication process” [1]. Hence, the Committee decision was made that it was a violation of the code of ethics to change only the corresponding author without adding or subtracting the author.

#### Case 4: Salami Publication

Some authors have attempted so-called “salami publication”. This tendency is particularly common for academic theses. In many cases, the author separates the theoretical background section of the thesis and submits it as a review article manuscript, and the remaining sections (introduction, results, and discussion) are submitted as another one or more manuscripts of original articles. Some authors have attempted to submit such separated manuscripts to two or more different journals, but these attempts have been discovered by the reviewers and editors of HIR. Such articles should be rejected.

#### Case 5: Duplicate Publication in Different Languages

Some authors who use non-English languages have attempted to duplicate publications in different languages to different journals. Most of these attempts are filtered by reviewers or editors of HIR. Such articles should be rejected.

### III. Discussion

Many occasions violating publication ethics have been identified. The Editorial Office strictly abide by rules of publication ethics established by the ICMJE Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals [1] and by the Korean

Association of Medical Journal Editors as “Good Publication Practice Guidelines for Medical Journals, 3rd edition” [2].

According to ICMJE Recommendations, authors should not submit the same manuscript, in the same or different languages, simultaneously to more than one journal. The authors of case 1 and 5 violated this recommendation [1]. The HIR Editorial Board allows the submission of a thesis for academic degree, a report of research grant, or a manuscript of proceedings as a manuscript, because this contributes to disseminate critical scientific findings to other researchers. However, authors submitting these manuscripts should cite the original thesis or reports and appropriately inform readers of this in the Acknowledgement section (cases 2 and 3). However, attempts of “salami publication” of academic theses, as in case 4, is strictly prohibited by the Editorial Board.

In conclusion, a majority of ethical issues in publication since 2010 have been focused on duplicate publications, with several other minor issues. The Editorial Board will continue to be vigilant in maintaining high ethical standards.

### Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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