

Editors Talk to Each Other

Dear Readers and Authors,

In an era hallmarked by both transparency and career pressure, where promotions are strongly linked to performance – which often boils down to the number of papers published – the temptation to increase the number of publications by using the same data to create multiple, similar publications is omnipresent. We call this “Systematic Publication”. This is a dangerous approach, since the distinction between right and wrong may be difficult and blurred for some authors. We want to help the authors of the Journal of Adhesive Dentistry to stay on the right side.

RIGHT: If an author or team of authors has developed a certain methodology to answer pertinent research questions, then there is nothing wrong in repeatedly using this method to broaden the database. This may yield a cluster of publications that brings the science forward and improves the quality of dentistry. In this scenario, it is legitimate to use “copy and paste” in the “Materials and Methods” section as long as the authors use their

own method or even that of colleagues, as long as they are referenced properly, giving credit to the authors who first published the method.

WRONG: If an author or team of authors uses the same data twice or even three times, then they may be crossing the line between right and wrong. In peer-reviewed journals, every author must sign a statement that the data are original and the paper was submitted only to the one journal. Thus, if identical (same) data are published multiple times, it is wrong and is seen as scientific misconduct by the scientific community. Only two exceptions to this are permissible: 1) Data which have been previously published by the authors are used again in a new publication as control or for comparison. However, these data must then be clearly declared as such and reference must be made to the first publication. 2) Of course every author of systematic review papers must use data from other authors. This is permissible, because the review articles must disclose their sources.

Editors are talking to each other! The following example may clearly illustrate a case of multiple use of

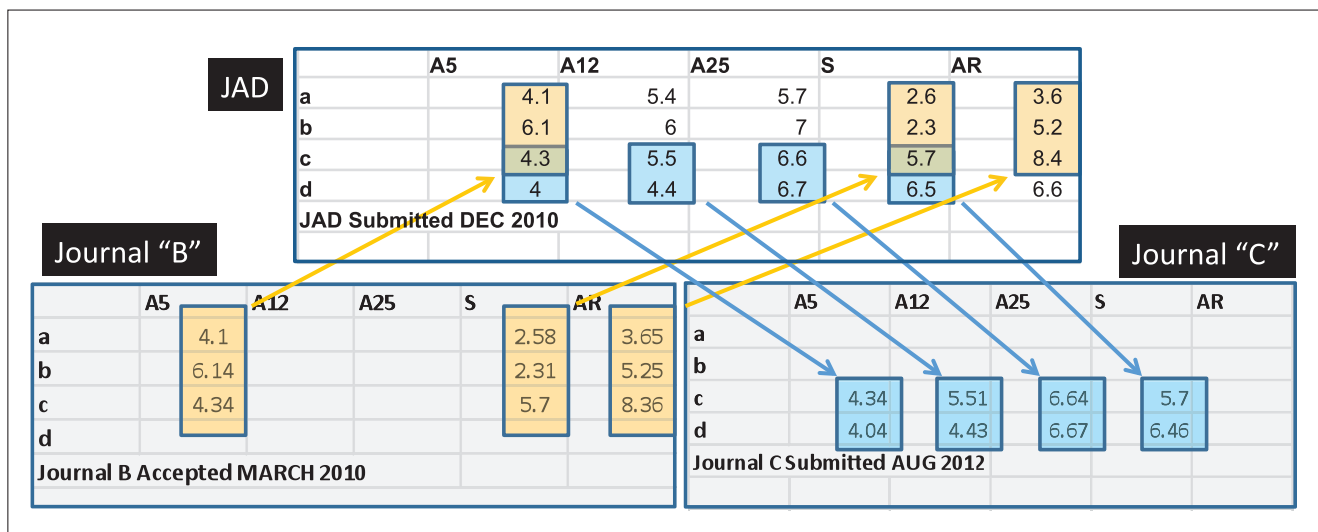


Fig 1 Flow of data in “Systematic Publishing”.

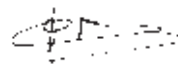
scientific data (see Figure 1). The Journal of Adhesive Dentistry has published a paper showing data which are displayed in the top table of the figure. We have removed the treatments under investigation and replaced them with abbreviations different from the original treatments/materials in order to maintain anonymity. The paper was submitted in December 2010, positively reviewed, and subsequently published in the Journal of Adhesive Dentistry (JAD). Sometime last year, the Editor of another peer-reviewed scientific journal, labeled here as Journal "C", brought to our attention that he had rejected a paper, submitted in August 2012 to his journal and containing as the main result the data displayed in the lower right table in the figure. For better comparison, we have reformatted the data into the same format as the JAD table. It is obvious that the data submitted to Journal "C" are a subset of the data already published by JAD. The excellent reviewer of Journal "C" furthermore mentioned that some of the data used for the rejected paper were also previously published in Journal "B". This paper was accepted for publication in March 2010. A close comparison of the table on the lower left side of

the figure clearly shows that all data of the publication in Journal "B" were used for the paper originally published in JAD. Very much to our dismay, our reviewer did not find this scientific misconduct. We must name it as such, because neither in the Journal of Adhesive Dentistry, nor in the manuscript submitted to Journal "C" was the earlier publication of the data disclosed.

Dear readers, in order to protect you from such faulty publications and to help our reviewers to identify such misconduct, we and the publisher have decided to purchase software which identifies identical text and data structures of submitted manuscripts in comparison with published papers. We will routinely run every paper before it is sent into the review process. Of course, our reviewers will be able to distinguish RIGHT from WRONG as outlined above, and with this we will further increase the quality of the Journal of Adhesive Dentistry.



JF Roulet



B Van Meerbeek