

# **Misconduct in research publishing**

*James K Tumwine*

*Professor Emeritus, CHS, Makerere University*

*Editor In Chief, African Health Sciences*

# Menu:

- Introduction
- Conceptualization, study design, and ethics
- Appropriate data analysis
- Authorship
- Conflict of Interest
- Peer Review
- Redundant publication
- Plagiarism
- Editors
- Recap
- End

# Introduction

- Hon. Minister
- Ladies and Gentlemen
- in your distinguished capacities
- All Protocol Observed!

# **Presentation influenced by:**

**Good Publication practice (from COPE)**

**Personal experience from publishing African Health Sciences (August 2001 – the present)**

Based on COPE, Good publication practice

# Integrity of the data is a process

## A. Conceptualization; study design and ethics

- Must answer a **clear specific research** question rather than “just collecting data” *fwaa!*
- Importance of a written proposal for the research
- Must have **ethical approval (by a REC) etc**
- Keeping records (up to 15 years!)

# Choose a design that is appropriate:

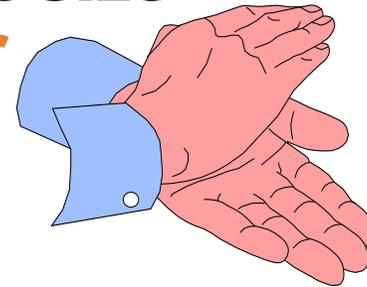
<b>Question</b>	<b>Study design</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Does the treatment work	<i>RCT or systematic review of RCTS</i>	
How good is this diagnostic test	<i>Prospective cohort</i>	Discuss
Is screening effective?	<i>RCT</i>	
What causes this disease?	<i>Prospective cohort study/ case control study</i>	
What is the prognosis	<i>Prospective cohort study</i>	
What do people think?	<i>Cross sectional survey/ cohort survey (over time)</i>	

# **State the hypothesis clearly**

- **Zinc supplementation will reduce pneumonia in young children x**

# Stating the Hypothesis

- ***Exposure factor or intervention***  
**Zinc (1 RDA) given as a single oral dose daily for 6 months**
- ***Study subjects***  
**to children 6-35 months of age, in whom zinc deficiency is common**
- ***Expected measure of effect size***  
**will result in a  $\geq 30\%$  lower**
- ***Outcomes***  
**risk of pneumonia**



# RESEARCH

- PROPOSAL &
- REPORT WRITING

+256 773 648-264

+256 759-003-993

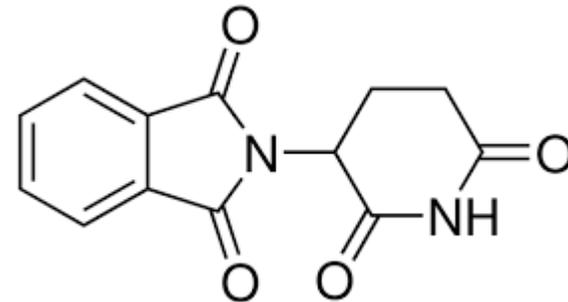


# Thalidomide was thought to be safe

**We cannot take the safety of any medication for granted**



Researchers thought this simple molecule was safe! WAAPI!



## **B. Appropriate data analysis**

- **Fabrication**
- **Falsification**
- **The authors must, in detail, explain methods of analysis**
- **Was there bias? How was it handled (in the design and interpretation)**

# Data fabrication and falsification:

**“Data fabrication = the researcher did not actually do the study but made up the data.”**

- **Data falsification = the researcher did the experiment, but then changed some of the data.” Some in the audience would call it “massage”!**

## Source:

<https://www.isnadsistemi.org/en/guide/isnad2-2/academic-writing/1-publication-ethics/1-1-violations-of-publication-ethics/#post-3277-footnote-ref-22>

# Retracted papers are a pain!



# C. AUTHORSHIP

## ICMJE 4 CRITERIA FOR AUTHORSHIP

1. Substantial contributions to the **conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND**
2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important **intellectual content; AND**

[REF: http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html](http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html)

# | CMJE CRITERIA FOR AUTHORSHIP

3. Final approval of the version to be published; **AND**

4. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work

- in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

**\*\*Authors should meet all four criteria for authorship, and all who meet the four criteria should be identified as authors.\*\***

# D. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- A conflict of interest involves a person or entity that **has two relationships competing with each other for the person's loyalty.**

= those which may not be fully apparent and which **may influence the judgment of author, reviewers, and editors.**

= when revealed later, will make a reasonable reader feel misled or deceived.

Could be **personal, commercial, political, academic or financial.**

# **E. PEER REVIEW**

## **A. Reviewers are chosen by editors to give:**

written opinion in order to improve the study

## **B. The submitted manuscript should not be retained or copied.**

## **C. Reviewers and editors:**

should not make any use of the data, arguments, or interpretations, unless they have the authors' permission.

# Reviewers

**should provide speedy,  
accurate, courteous,  
unbiased and justifiable reports.**

**If they suspect **misconduct**, they should write in  
confidence to the editor.**

## **F. Redundant (or ‘salami’) publications:**

- Publishing **many very similar** manuscripts
- based on the same experiment.
- It can make readers less likely to pay attention to your manuscripts”.[\[6\]](#)

# G. Plagiarism

“Plagiarism = writer deliberately **uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original** (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.”[\[3\]](#)

**Source:** Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA), “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices” (30 December 2019). [↑](#)

# Examples of plagiarism

“Stealing material from another source and passing it off as your own, e.g.

- (a) buying a paper from a research service, essay bank or term paper mill (either pre-written or specially written),
- (b) copying a whole paper from a source text without proper acknowledgement....”

**Source:** Chris Park, “In Other (People’s) Words: Plagiarism by university students-literature and lessons”, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 28/5 (2003), 475. [↑](#)

# Plagiarism (more examples)

- “Submitting a **paper written by someone else** (e.g. a peer or relative) and **passing it off as your own.**
- Copying sections of material from one or more source texts, supplying proper documentation (including the full reference) **but leaving out quotation marks,** thus giving the impression that the material has been paraphrased rather than directly quoted.”<sup>[4]</sup>

**Source:** Chris Park, “In Other (People’s) Words: Plagiarism by university students-literature and lessons”, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 28/5 (2003), 475. [↑](#)

## **H. Role of editors**

- **Stewards/gatekeepers of their journal**
- **Balance interests of many constituents,**
  - **readers, authors**
  - **staff, owners**
  - **editorial board members**
  - **advertisers and the media.**

# Decisions

- **Editors' decisions should be based on the paper's:**
- **importance, originality, clarity,**
- **and the study's relevance to the remit of the journal.**

**Example jiggers versus frostbite**

# What to do with misconduct

- (1) The general principle confirming misconduct is **intention to cause others to regard as true that which is not true.**
- (2) We must focus, on the
- **intention** of the researcher, author, editor, reviewer or publisher involved.

# Deception

- (3) **Deception** may be by intention,
  - reckless disregard of possible consequences,
  - or by negligence.
- ***Obulimba; Okubeiha; Miriambo;***
- Best practice requires complete honesty

# Editors

- Should not simply reject papers
  - that raise questions of misconduct.
- Are ethically obliged to pursue the case.
- Knowing how to investigate
  - . and respond to possible cases of misconduct is difficult.
- It is for the editor to decide what action to take.

# **What I have discussed with you regarding Good publishing practice Practice**

- Introduction
- Conceptualization, study design, and ethics
- Appropriate data analysis
- Authorship
- Conflict of Interest
- Peer Review
- Redundant publication
- Plagiarism
- Editors

**END**

- **Thank you for listening**
- **Ahsante sana!**