Duplicate publication and salami reports corrupt the scientific record, no matter the field of inquiry. The highest vigilance is required to avoid these practices and to detect them when they do occur. Text recycling, in general, raises many questions about clarity in communication, copyright infringement, and violation of editorial agreements (Andreesu, 2013). Authors/investigators who write manuscripts, peer reviewers who assess submissions, and editors who select papers for publication are all responsible for ensuring integrity of the scientific record and supporting clarity in scientific communication.

Definitions about what constitutes duplicate publication, salami reporting, and text recycling are fundamental in avoiding these ethically compromised scholarly practices in the first place and detecting them when they occur. Duplicate publication, narrowly defined as publication of identical papers in more than one journal, extends to situations involving substantial reuse of author/investigator work that has appeared in already published or submitted work (American Psychological Association [APA], 2010, p. 13; Martin, 2013). Text recycling on a large scale is duplicate publication; smaller-scale text recycling involves reuse of a block of previously published text comprising a smaller number of words or tables (Andreesu, 2013). Salami reports arise from preparation and publication of multiple, piecemeal, or fragmented reports of findings from a single study (APA, 2010, p. 14) and can be characterized as the attempt to “wring too many papers from one study” (Baggs, 2008, p. 296); salami reports sometimes involve text recycling. Self-plagiarism refers to the reuse of an author’s own work, an entire set or a subset of related issues, whereas plagiarism refers to the wrongful and/or unauthorized use of the work of another author (Martin, 2013).

Duplicate and salami publishing distort the scientific record by using a large number of papers to give the impression that more data undergird findings related to a research question or hypothesis than were actually obtained in a study (Wilmshurst, 2013). Careful bibliometric detective work has revealed a wide variety of strategies for creating duplication and salami publishing (von Elm, Poglia, Walder, & Tramer, 2004), some of which are quite cagey and difficult to detect. Inadvertent incorporation of findings from duplicate publications has long been known as a threat to conclusions from meta-analysis (Tramer, Reynolds, Moore, & McQuay, 1997). Examples continue to be identified (e.g., Francis, Mielewczik, Zargaran, & Cole, 2013) and point out the serious deleterious outcome of duplicate and salami publishing, especially those involving clinical trials: invalid conclusions from subsequent meta-analysis create false assurance about the effects of apparently efficacious interventions when they are implemented in clinical practice.

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) is an organization of journal members that creates standards and provides advice about publication ethics; Nursing Research is a member of COPE. Issues related to duplicate publication, salami publishing, and self-plagiarism (text recycling) are addressed in cases posted on the COPE Web site. It is well worth taking time to review the COPE cases to become familiar with the extent of the problems arising from detection and response to concerns about duplicate publication, salami reports, and text recycling. Visit http://publicationethics.org; search “duplicate publication.”

Authors/investigators are responsible for knowing and acting on ethical standards to avoid submitting duplicate or salami manuscripts. As stated in APA (2010, p. 13), outright duplicate publication is expressly forbidden. Whether multiple papers from a single study are justified because additional papers make a novel contribution is always a matter of judgment, but authors/investigators are expected to be conservative in their evaluations of when overlap in use of subjects, variables, and occasions of measurement is justified (Christakis & Rivara, 2006). Authors must alert the editor whenever two or more papers based on a subset of a larger data set have been published or are under review (APA, 2010, p. 15). At Nursing Research, this information should be provided in a letter to the Editor, uploaded with the original submission; complete citation information should be included. Relevant content from these papers
should be included in the manuscript itself as part of the literature review or methods sections. It is acceptable but not required that citations be blinded in the manuscript, as long as each citation indicator (e.g., Author, citation A) can be linked directly to the information provided to the Editor. Authors/investigators reporting secondary analyses should be aware that, depending on agreements with the publisher of the primary report, they may no longer hold copyright to tables and figures and will need to obtain permission to reuse or adapt them; this often occurs with text recycling of tables describing samples.

Among reviewers of manuscripts for nursing journals, duplicate and salami publication is a frequent concern. Among 1,675 reviewers of 52 nursing journals, 21% reported that they had concerns about duplicate publication when reviewing a manuscript; of these, 94% reported their concern to the editor (Broome, Dougherty, Freda, Kearney, & Baggs, 2010). Reviewers should be alert to duplicate and salami publication based on their knowledge of the literature and additional scrutiny of the literature during the process of their review. If a reviewer is concerned about the possibility of duplicate or salami publication, the editor should be notified and reviewers should expect a response to their concern. When a manuscript under review is identified as a secondary analysis, special attention should be directed to evaluating the value added to the primary report by the submission.

Editors are accountable for everything published in their journal, and maintaining integrity of the scientific record is a key aspect of editorial accountability (COPE, 2011). At Nursing Research, all submissions are checked for duplication and text recycling using iThenticate® before being assigned to peer review. Concerns about duplicate or salami publication expressed by reviewers or that we note in the Editorial Office are investigated, and appropriate action is taken until the concern is resolved. If explanations from the author are satisfactory, the author and reviewer are separately and confidentially informed and the review may continue. Manuscripts found to be duplicative may be rejected at any time during the review or production process, and published papers later found to be duplicative may be retracted (APA, 2010, p. 15).

At any time from query about a manuscript possibility through submission, review, to publication and beyond, authors, reviewers, and readers should seek the guidance of editors when they have questions about duplicate publication, salami reports, or text recycling. Working together, we can maintain integrity of the scientific record in nursing so that our research findings are a reliable source of knowledge for optimizing patient care.

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