



Are We Acting Responsibly Against Multiple Submission?

A few months ago, we sent an article back to the author for revision after peer review. However, not getting a response from the author made us suspicious. When we searched the article title and author name on the internet, we saw that the article was just published in another journal. When we examined the submission process in the journal in which the article was published, we saw that the author made multiple submissions. This was the third multiple-submission case we have seen in the last 2 years. It was not unexpected to see multiple submissions, but the editors' take on this was interesting and encouraged me to write this editorial.

In Table 1, you can see the details of three multiple-submission cases that we have seen in the last 2 years. Since the authors did not respond to our letters, we contacted the editors of the journals in which the articles were published. Only one editor gave us feedback.

In scientific publishing, the Ingelfinger rule¹ does not consider submissions that are currently being evaluated by another journal. Most of them require authors to indicate in their cover letter that their manuscript has not been previously published or submitted to another journal. Authors are warned by ICMJE as "Authors should not submit the same manuscript, in the same or different languages, simultaneously to more than one journal." The rationale is "the potential for disagreement when two (or more) journals claim the right to publish a manuscript that has been submitted simultaneously to more than one journal, and the possibility that two or more journals will unknowingly and unnecessarily undertake

the work of peer review, edit the same manuscript, and publish the same article".²

Multiple submissions are not considered scientific misconduct, but it can be one of the most common unethical behaviors. It may also result in a double publication, which can be easily detected by plagiarism software.³ Table 2 shows the causes and consequences of multiple submissions. Editors and institutes should play an important role in preventing multiple submissions. Specifically, editors and journal policies should be a deterrent in this regard. However, it is important for institutes to train and raise awareness of scientists on this subject.

In recent years, preprint servers have increased. As defined by COPE, "the preprint is a scholarly manuscript posted by the author(s) in an openly accessible platform, usually before or in parallel with the peer review process".⁴ Preprints allow authors to receive timely feedback and commentary on research before submitting it to a peer-reviewed journal, request the origin of an idea, and facilitate and accelerate research dissemination and access to research.⁵ Although these platforms are not a solution to the multiple-submission problem, they can contribute to the reduction of its frequency.

In conclusion, editors and publishers should be more responsible and discouraged about multiple submissions, which is one of the most abused issues in scientific publishing.

TABLE 1. Details of Multiple-Submission Cases we have Seen in the Last 2 Years

Cases	What made us doubt?	Feedback from author	Feedback from editor of the other journal	Results
Case 1	No response to revision request	No withdrawal request by the author	The editor stated that the author was warned for his/her unethical behavior, but the article would not be retracted	We withdrew the manuscript
Case 2	Informing the editor by the reviewer (two journals sending the manuscript to the same reviewer)	No withdrawal request by the author	No	The manuscript was rejected by both journals
Case 3	No response to revision request	No withdrawal request by the author	No	We withdrew the manuscript



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TABLE 2. Causes and Consequences for Multiple Submissions

Causes for multiple submissions	Consequences of multiple submissions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster publication • A long review process of manuscripts • Insensitivity/irresponsibility to the questions for the authors about the manuscript processes • Not seen as unethical • Lack of knowledge about the consequence of multiple submissions • Cumbersome and time-consuming withdrawal processes of journals • Failure of editors and institutions to act responsibly in this regard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double publication (redundant evidence) and literature distortion • Retraction due to double publication • Damaging the author's and institution's reputation • Wasting the time of editors and peer reviewers • Banning the author from both journals for a period of time

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