

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Reality of Misconduct in Iranian Orthopedic Publications

Ali Tabrizi, MD; Seyed Amir Mahlisha Kazemi Shishavan, MD

*Research performed at Clinical Research Development Unit of Imam Khomeini Hospital, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran*

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## Dear Editor

In a newly published article in Science Journal 2018, the situation of Iran in misconduct and retracted articles was the worst and the rate of retracted papers was higher than that in other countries (1). This resulted in more attention toward Iranian published papers. There was a low rate of retraction in the medical literature; however, there has been a recent increase in retractions so far (2). Fake research papers and scientific misconduct are misleading the researchers; in addition, they can impose a huge cost on the academic centers and health systems (2). Finally, invalid published research may give rise to incorrect treatment guidelines that may harm the patients. Moreover, the number of published scientific articles is increasing due to the developments of societies and advancements in technology (2). Accordingly, research-involved authorities decided to revise and establish stricter policies for ethics and publication condition. Proper workshops are held for authors and researchers about the ethics of publication in Iranian academic centers (3). Recently, the retraction watch database website (<http://retractiondatabase.org/RetractionSearch.aspx>) facilitates the search and review of retracted articles with more details. For this reason, conditions are provided for orthopedic specialists to review the status of orthopedic studies. In total, 10 Iranian orthopedic studies were found retracted based on our search in the retraction watch database. Regarding this database, the numbers of all the papers which identified retracted were 569 and 54 in Iran and other countries, respectively. The published orthopedic articles from Iran included 18.5% of the total orthopedic papers worldwide which include 1.7% of the Iranian retracted studies. The low rate of retractions in orthopedics is a great pleasure but unfortunately, the most important reasons behind retraction were fake peer-reviews, plagiarism, and duplicate publications.

Yan et al. considered the main reasons for the orthopedic retractions as fraudulent data and plagiarism

(2). There was a difference between reasons for a retracted orthopedic paper in Iran, compared to that in other countries. One of the reasons for this can be due to the presence of private institutions which interferes with medical research and publishing scientific articles without any organizational affiliation (4). Based on the current reports, there has been a growing increase in the rate of publishing scientific papers between 1994 and 2009 in Iran, thereby increasing the rate of research misconduct and retraction (5).

Orthopedics has a long history in Iran, and great orthopedic surgeons are responsible for education and research in Iranian academic centers (6). Approximately, 3000 orthopedic surgeons are practicing in most cities even small ones throughout the country (6). Ethical and unethical behaviors can be observed in every growing society. More than 45000 Iranian scientific articles are annually indexed in Scopus so that it is inevitable to perform a few misconduct research (7). It seems that the use of the ethical code issued by the Ethics Committee of the universities can be helpful in publishing honest research. It is also important to use the academic e-mail addresses which show the authors organizational affiliation. Furthermore, the reviewers should be selected based on the journal guidelines. Regarding the historical background of orthopedics in Iran, it is our duty to protect our dignity.

Ali Tabrizi MD

Clinical Research Development Unit of Imam Khomeini Hospital, Department of orthopedics, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran

Seyed Amir Mahlisha Kazemi Shishavan MD

Department of Orthopedics, Shariati Hospital. Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Tehran, Iran

**Corresponding Author:** Ali Tabrizi, Clinical Research Development Unit, Imam Khomeini Hospital, Urmia University of Medical Sciences, Urmia, Iran  
Email: [Ali.tab.ms@gmail.com](mailto:Ali.tab.ms@gmail.com)

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