LETTER TO THE EDITOR

PLAGIARISM: AN AWFUL MALPRACTICE IN ACADEMIC PUBLISHING

Dear Sir,

This is an interesting story of a bad practice in academic writing which seems to be increasing nowadays. I was preparing to report on a case of 33-year old Iraqi lady with a Shone's complex. This is a very rare congenital heart disease described for the first time by Dr. Shone et al in 1963 [1]. I did a search on the net for relevant references using the Endnote software. Beside the original paper of Shone et al, I was happy to retrieve and download recent references on this rare anomaly.

Among the retrieved papers, there were two published papers in open access Indian journals by 2 groups of authors from 2 Indian institutes. The first paper was published in 2009 [2] and the second in 2014 [3]. Each paper described a patient with Shone's complex. The first case was a 30-year old man while the second was a 2-year old female child. To my surprise, the echo images were exactly the same in both papers as well as the figures legends (Figure 1-A and B).

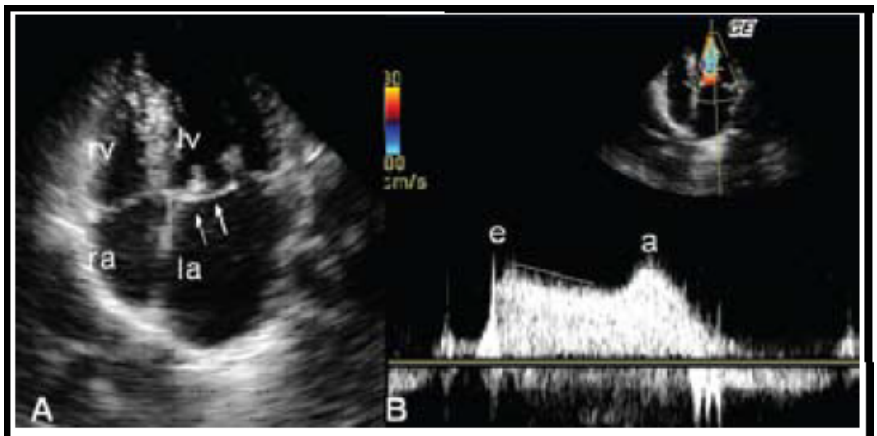

Fig. 1 : Congenital mitral stenosis
Transthoracic echocardiograms. A: Apical four-chamber view. This diastolic frame shows a dilated LA and supravalvar mitral stenosing ring (arrows) that is adherent to the mitral valve.
B: Continuous –wave Doppler studies demonstrated increased peak early (e) and late atrial (a) diastolic flow velocities and decreased diastolic slope (line), peak a-wave velocity is increased, 2 m/s.

Figure 1-A. Echo and Doppler image from the first article.

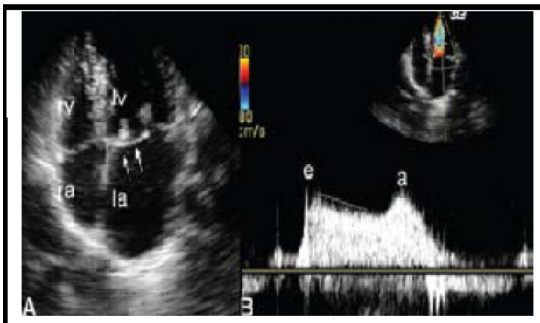

Image 1:

Congenital mitral stenosis Transthoracic echocardiograms.

A: Apical four-chamber view. This diastolic frame shows a dilated LA and supravalvar mitral stenosing ring (arrows) that is adherent to the mitral valve.

B: Continuous –wave Doppler studies demonstrated increased peak early (e) and late atrial (a) diastolic flow velocities and decreased diastolic slope (line), peak a-wave velocity is increased, 2 m/s.

Figure 1-B. Echo and Doppler image from the second article.

The clinical notes of the first case were almost the same to the second with similar texts describing the clinical features in both cases. The echo findings in both cases were almost the same with little modification. The lists of 6 references were exactly the same in both papers and even in the same sequence (Figure 2-A and B).

References

1. Shone JD, Sellers RD, Anderson RC, Adams P Jr, Lillehei CW, Edwards JE. The developmental complex of "parachute mitral valve," supravalvular ring of left atrium, subaortic stenosis, and coarctation of aorta. Am J Cardiol 1963; 11:714–25.
2. Brown JW, Ruzmetov M, Vijay P, et al. Operative results and outcomes in children with Shone's anomaly. Ann Thorac Surg 2005;79:1358-65.
3. Subramanyan R. Mitral stenosis, supravalvular ring. Available at: http:// www.emedicine.com/ped/topic2516.htm (Accessed on 11 June 2007).
4. Oosthoek PW, Wenink AC, Wisse LJ, et al. Development of the papillary muscles of the mitral valve: morphogenetic background of parachute-like asymmetric mitral valves and other mitral valve anomalies. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg 1998; 116: 36–46.
5. Goswami NJ, Wen TS, Freeman GL. An unusual presentation of congenital heart disease. Tex Heart Inst J 2003; 30: 214-7.
6. Brauner R A, Laks H, Drinkwater DC Jr, Scholl F, McCaffery S. Multiple left heart obstructions (Shone's anomaly) with mitral valve involvement: long-term surgical outcome. Ann Thorac Surg 1997;64:721-9.

Figure 2-A. List of references of the first article.

References:

1. Shone JD, Sellers RD, Anderson RC, Adams P Jr, Lillehei CW, Edwards JE. The developmental complex of "parachute mitral valve," supravalvular ring of left atrium, subaortic stenosis, and coarctation of aorta. Am J Cardiol 1963; 11:714–25.

2. Brown JW, Ruzmetov M, Vijay P, et al. Operative results and outcomes in children with Shone's anomaly. Ann Thorac Surg 2005;79:1358-65.

3. Subramanyan R. Mitral stenosis, supravalvular ring. Available at: http:// www.emedicine.com/ped/topic2516.htm (Accessed on 11 June 2007).

4. Oosthoek PW, Wenink AC, Wisse LJ, et al. Development of the papillary muscles of the mitral valve: morphogenetic background of parachute-like asymmetric mitral valves and other mitral valve anomalies. J Thorac Cardiovasc Surg 1998; 116: 36–46.

5. Goswami NJ, Wen TS, Freeman GL. An unusual presentation of congenital heart disease. Tex Heart Inst J 2003; 30: 214-7.

6. Brauner R A, Laks H, Drinkwater DC Jr, Scholl F, McCaffery S. Multiple left heart obstructions (Shone's anomaly) with mitral valve involvement: long-term surgical outcome. Ann Thorac Surg

Figure 2-B. List of references of the second article.

The thing that I couldn't imagine is the literal stealing of the whole discussion section from the first to the second paper including even the punctuation marks. It became very clear that I was facing a very frank example of plagiarism. The authors of the second paper have "copied" the images, discussion and references from the first paper and "pasted" them to their paper. Moreover, a story of an Indian kid presumed to have Shone's complex has been described along with a personal photo so that it sounds real (Figure. 3).

Figure 3. A photo of a kid presumed to have a Shone complex reported in the second article.

It is worthy to note that despite this very obvious publishing malpractice of the second journal, it escaped black-listing by Jeffrey Beal, the well-known American librarian. Mr

Beal is well known for his criticism of predatory open access publishing. He has lists of predatory publishers and journals that are continuously updated and posted on the net [4]. The website of the second journal states that the "journal is strictly against any form of "Plagiarism". Authors submitting plagiarized manuscripts are warned that their manuscripts would be rejected and a warning letter would be sent to them".

Plagiarism is an ancient cheating practice that was first noted in 561 AD. It refers to the intentional or unintentional use of another's work or ideas, published or unpublished, without clearly acknowledging the source of that work or idea. Plagiarism has been made easier by the internet and word processing. Cutting and pasting a few sentences, paragraphs or even whole works is comparatively easy and requires little skill or imagination [5].

Being academic researchers, our responsibility is great. We have to scrutinize the sources of our information. Although articles look nice, well-written, supported by colored pictures and appearing in journals of big attractive names, still we have to make our own investigations. Moreover, understanding the proper method of writing in-text and end-text citation according to a standardized system (Vancouver or Harvard) is important to avoid the "unintentional" plagiarism.

References

1. Shone JD, Sellers RD, Anderson RC, Adams P Jr, Lillehei CW, Edwards JE. The developmental complex of "parachute mitral valve," supravalvular ring of left atrium, subaortic stenosis, and coarctation of aorta. Am J Cardiol 1963; 11:714–25. URL: *https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/13988650*

2. Kedareshwar PS Narvencar, Ana Karina Jaques e Costa, Vijaysinh R Patil. Shone's Complex. JAPI 2009;57:415-417 Available from *www.japi.org/may_2009/article_12.pdf?q=shone*

3. Patil P, Nigwekar P, Kumar P, Sable R, Kumar C A, Pawar SK. Shone's complex – a rare case report. Indian Journal of Basic and Applied Medical Research 2014;4(1):23-27 Available from *ijbamr.com/pdf/December%202014%2023-27.pdf.pdf*

4. Beal's List of Predatory Journals and Publishers [Monograph on the Net]. Available from *http://beallslist.weebly.com* [Cited on September 28th 2017]

5. Logue R. Plagiarism: the internet makes it easy. Nursing Standard 2004;18(51):40-43 DOI:10.7748/ns2004.09.18.51.40.c3685 URL: *https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15487496*

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