

# **Proposed policy for handling plagiarism complaints in materials published by the Society for Clinical Data Management (SCDM)**

Based upon plagiarism policy expressed in IEEE Publication Services and Products Board Operations Manual © 2002 IEEE and Introduction to the Guidelines for Handling Plagiarism Complaints at [http://www.ieee.org/publications\\_standards/publications/rights/plagiarism.html](http://www.ieee.org/publications_standards/publications/rights/plagiarism.html) © 2011 IEEE. Used with permission.

Those wishing to use any of the material from this document are required to request permission from both the Society for Clinical Data Management ([mmargues@scdm.org](mailto:mmargues@scdm.org)) and the IEEE Copyrights and Permissions representatives ([copyrights@ieee.org](mailto:copyrights@ieee.org)).

**\*Any revisions to this guidance document require the review and approval of the SCDM Board of Trustees.**

# **Guidelines for Handling Plagiarism Complaints**

## **Overview**

SCDM defines plagiarism as the reuse of someone else's prior ideas, processes, results, or words without explicitly acknowledging the original author and source. It is important for all SCDM authors to recognize that plagiarism in any form, at any level, is unacceptable and is considered a serious breach of professional conduct, with potentially severe ethical and legal consequences.

Equally important to the process of recognizing an act of plagiarism is clarifying who shall be responsible for responding to any complaints of alleged plagiarism. These guidelines specify that the person(s) responsible for the specific SCDM publication or program shall be responsible for conducting an investigation and determining if plagiarism has in fact taken place. In order to accomplish this critical task, the responsible person(s) shall discuss the incident with the applicable SCDM committee or taskforce to help make a recommendation on the allegation. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that an unbiased process is followed.

The scope of this document shall include all materials published on behalf of SCDM, which includes (but is not limited to):

- SCDM Data Basics
- SCDM Data Connections
- SCDM Conference Abstracts and Presentations
- Educational Offerings and Webinars
- Good Clinical Data Management Practices (GCDMP) document

The responsible person(s) must also bring these efforts to the attention of the Chair of the respective SCDM committee; both at the beginning of an investigation and after findings have been reached for final approval.

In addition, guidelines for proper referencing of previously published material can be found in the SCDM Style Guide.

## **Allegations of Misconduct**

### **A. HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

1. During the handling of a complaint, the contents of the complaint, identity of the persons involved and the scope of the inquiry shall remain confidential to the extent practicable, consistent with the need for information and expeditious review. All inquiries shall be handled promptly and fairly. All parties relevant to the allegation shall be given the opportunity to respond.

2. In handling a case of alleged plagiarism, if the article has previously been published the editor should request the following basic information from the complainant on:

a. The original article:

- (1) Title of article
- (2) Full list of author names
- (3) Title and date of publication, conference presentation or materials, or other educational offering in which original appeared

b. The use of someone else's unpublished ideas:

- (1) Title or description of idea
- (2) Full list of creators
- (3) Verifiable date of creation

c. The alleged plagiarized item:

- (1) Title of article
- (2) Full list of author names
- (3) Publication title and date in which the paper appeared

d. Copies of both articles or, if appropriate, documentation of an idea and the subsequent article, preferably with highlighted text showing all instances of inappropriate reuse

e. Full name and address of complainant

3. If a complaint is received concerning the accuracy, completeness or attribution of material submitted to SCDM, the applicable SCDM Committee or Taskforce leader(s) shall investigate the complaint. If it is determined that the complaint is not substantiated, the Committee or Taskforce leader(s) shall dismiss the complaint and notify the complainant of the conclusion. The taskforce leader(s) may also recommend that the complainant prepare and submit a rebuttal for publication.

## **B. INVESTIGATING POSSIBLE AUTHOR MISCONDUCT**

1. If an individual learns that an author may have acted improperly, which may include but is not limited to misrepresenting data or plagiarizing text, they will inform the appropriate SCDM Committee or Taskforce leader(s) who will investigate the alleged misconduct. All inquiries shall be handled promptly and fairly. All parties relevant to the allegation shall be given the opportunity to respond.

2. The Publications Taskforce leader(s) will notify the author that an inquiry has been undertaken. The purpose of this notification is to provide information and a record. The taskforce leader(s) will also notify the SCDM Publications Taskforce, and if appropriate, the SCDM Board of Trustees.

## **C. CORRECTIVE ACTIONS FOR AUTHOR MISCONDUCT**

2. The Publications Taskforce leader(s) or designee will offer the named individual(s) the opportunity to respond within 30 days to the recommended action(s). No sooner than 30 days and no later than 90 days after notifying the individual(s) named in the Publications Taskforce leader(s) or designee's recommendation, the taskforce leader(s) or designee will issue a final determination.

The decision of the Publications Taskforce leader(s) or designee will be forwarded to the SCDM Board of Trustees for determination of corrective actions.

## **D. IDENTIFYING PLAGIARISM**

There are several basic factors to consider when evaluating a case of possible plagiarism:

- Amount or quantity (full paper, a section of a paper, a page, a paragraph, a sentence, phrases)
- Use of quotation marks for all copied text
- Appropriate placement of credit notices
- Improper paraphrasing

Potentially complicating the effort to identify plagiarism is the fact that each of the above basic factors can be combined with other factors, creating a range of possible plagiarism scenarios.

## **E. GUIDELINES FOR ADJUDICATING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PLAGIARISM**

The following guidelines require or recommend appropriate corrective actions to be taken by editors of SCDM publications for each of five defined levels (or degrees) of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, (a) uncredited copying of someone else's work, (b) using someone else's material without clear delineation or citation, and (c) uncited reuse of an author's previously published work that also involves other authors. It should be noted that plagiarism is a type of copyright infringement, and as such may also subject the author(s) to legal liability. These guidelines apply to all manuscripts at any point in the publication process, from

initial submission to final publication. Proposed corrective actions related to level 1 or 2 of the following shall be approved by the SCDM Chair. Prior to carrying-out any corrective actions, it is required that a legal review be processed on behalf of SCDM. The review is to ensure that, before such serious actions are taken, SCDM procedures were followed in an unbiased and proper manner.

A record of all investigations, corrective actions and offending authors will be maintained by the SCDM Publications Taskforce. All articles submitted for publication will include a cross-check against this data to ensure that authors are in good standing before their work is included.

## **F. LEVELS OF PLAGIARISM AND CORRESPONDING CORRECTIVE ACTION**

**1. Uncredited Verbatim Copying of a Full Paper, or Uncredited Verbatim Copying of a Major Portion (more than 50%) within a Single Paper--**An instance is where a large section of the original paper is copied without quotation marks, credit notice, reference, and bibliography. This case also includes instances where different portions of a paper are copied without attribution from a number of papers by other authors, and the sum of plagiarized material is more 50%, OR

**Uncredited Verbatim Copying within More than a Single Paper by the Same Author(s)--** This includes instances where more than one paper by the offending author(s) has been found to contain plagiarized content, and all the percentages of plagiarized material in each of the discovered papers sum to greater than 50%.

### **a. In these cases, corrective actions that may be taken include:**

- (1) Prohibition of participation in all SCDM-sponsored activities (publications, conferences, committees, education programs etc.) by the offending individual(s) for 3 to 5 years as determined by SCDM's current Chairperson.
- (2) Rejection and return of all papers by the author(s) that are currently in review or in any SCDM publication queue (papers may be re-submitted after prohibition term has expired).
- (3) The offending individual(s) shall prepare and submit an apology to the plagiarized author(s) and publication editor. In any cases where an article is inadvertently published with plagiarized content, SCDM will then publish the offending author's apology in the next publication issue.
- (4) SCDM reserves the right to revoke the offending author's membership into the Society as well, for a length of time as deemed appropriate by the BoT.

**2. Uncredited Verbatim Copying of a Large Portion (greater than 20% and up to 50%) within a Paper--**An instance is where a section of the original paper is copied from another paper without quotation marks, credit notice, reference, and bibliography. This case also includes instances where different portions of a paper are copied without attribution from a number of papers by other authors, and the sum of copying results in a large portion of

plagiarized material (up to 50%) in the paper, OR

**Uncredited Verbatim Copying within More than One Paper by the Same Author(s)--**

This includes instances where the sum of plagiarized material from the different papers would constitute the equivalent of a large portion (greater than 20% and up to 50%) of the discovered paper's sum up to 50%.

**a. In these cases, corrective actions that may be taken include:**

- (1) Prohibition of participation in all SCDM-sponsored activities (publications, conferences, committees, education programs etc.) by the offending individual(s) for 1 to 3 years as determined by SCDM's Chairperson.
- (2) Rejection and return of all papers by the author(s) that are currently in review or in any SCDM publication queue (papers may be re-submitted after prohibition term has expired).
- (3) The offending individual(s) shall prepare and submit an apology to the plagiarized author(s) and publication editor. In any cases where an article is inadvertently published with plagiarized content, SCDM will then publish the offending author's apology in the next publication issue.
- (4) SCDM reserves the right to revoke the offending author's membership into the Society as well, for a length of time as deemed appropriate by the BoT.

**3. Uncredited Verbatim Copying of Individual Elements (Paragraph(s), Sentence(s), Illustration(s), etc.) Resulting in a Significant Portion (up to 20%) within a Paper--**An instance could be where portions of original paper are used in another paper without quotation marks, credit notice, reference, and bibliography.

**a. In these cases, corrective actions that may be taken include:**

- (1) Prohibition of participation in all SCDM sponsored activities (publications, conferences, committees, education programs etc.) by the offending individual(s) for the next 1 or 2 years as determined by SCDM's Chairperson.
- (2) Rejection and return of all papers by the author(s) that are currently in review or in any SCDM publication queue (papers may be re-submitted after prohibition term has expired).
- (3) The offending individual(s) shall prepare and submit an apology to the plagiarized author(s) and publication editor. In any cases where an article is inadvertently published with plagiarized content, SCDM will then publish the offending author's apology in the next publication issue.
- (4) SCDM reserves the right to revoke the offending author's membership into the Society as well, for a length of time as deemed appropriate by the BoT.

**4. Uncredited Improper Paraphrasing of Pages or Paragraphs. Instances of improper paraphrasing occur when only a few words and phrases have been changed or when the original sentence order has been rearranged; no credit notice or reference appears with the text.**

**a. In these cases, corrective actions that may be taken include:**

(1) Prohibition of participation in all SCDM-sponsored activities (publications, conferences, committees, education programs etc.) by the offending individual(s) for 1 year as determined by SCDM's Chairperson.

(2) Rejection and return of all papers by the author(s) that are currently in review or in any SCDM publication queue (papers may be re-submitted after prohibition term has expired).

(3) The offending individual(s) shall prepare and submit an apology to the plagiarized author(s) and publication editor. In any cases where an article is inadvertently published with plagiarized content, SCDM will then publish the offending author's apology in the next publication issue.

**5. Credited Verbatim Copying of a Major Portion of a Paper without Clear Delineation--** Instances could include sections of an original paper copied from another paper; credit notice is used but absence of quotation marks or offset text does not clearly reference or identify the specific, copied material.

**a. In these cases, corrective actions that may be taken include:**

(1) Prohibition of participation in all SCDM-sponsored activities (publications, conferences, committees, education programs etc.) by the offending individual(s) for 1 year as determined by SCDM's Chairperson.

(2) Rejection and return of all papers by the author(s) that are currently in review or in any SCDM publication queue (papers may be re-submitted after prohibition term has expired).

(3) The offending individual(s) shall prepare and submit an apology to the plagiarized author(s) and publication editor. In any cases where an article is inadvertently published with plagiarized content, SCDM will then publish the offending author's apology in the next publication issue.