BE YOURSELF!

Giving credit where credit is due...

Lessons in HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM
What is PLAGIARISM?

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary states that to plagiarize means to “to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one’s own; use (another’s production) without crediting the source”\(^1\).

IMPLICATIONS for people in Medicine

Plagiarism is a form of dishonesty and can have serious consequences, especially for those in the medical profession. In the university context, plagiarism is recognized as a form of academic misconduct and individuals who are found to have plagiarized are subject to a range of penalties up to and including expulsion from the university, depending upon the severity of the offence. Physicians committing dishonest acts may also jeopardize their own career or opportunities for advancement.

AVOIDING plagiarism

Advancements in computer technology have dramatically increased access to a wide range of resources and materials. Unfortunately, the easy access and portability of information has also resulted in increased likelihood that information may be transferred and used without adequate credit being given to authors of original ideas and words. In some instances, the failure to give credit may be accidental. In other instances, it may be a deliberate attempt to steal credit for another’s work. However, when plagiarism is discovered, the integrity of those found guilty of the offence is brought into question even if it is believed by some that the plagiarism was accidental. Thus, individuals are wise to consider ways to eliminate the possibility that they will be found guilty of the offence of plagiarism. The following are some strategies that may help.

AVOID ‘cutting and pasting’

It is very easy to highlight, select, copy and paste large chunks of information from original sources found on the internet or in electronic documents accessible from your computer. However, this activity is a risky one for those wishing to avoid an accusation of plagiarism. A more effective strategy would be to read material, open a new document, attempt to summarize or re-write the material in your own words and place a note, including citation information, with your summary so that if you decide to use this information in your final work it will be easy for you to give proper credit to the original source and so that you are sure that what you are using does not closely resemble the wording and sentence structure of the original.

If you anticipate that you will want to use a quotation, be sure to put the letter “Q” before the words you place in your draft document, put quotation marks around the material and attach a note with citation information, including page number. Again, if you decide to use this quote, it will be easy to cite the original source.

GIVE CREDIT where credit is due

When giving presentations, writing papers, or developing academic or professional material for public presentation, always give credit to the authors of original ideas or thoughts. This includes the use of photographs, tables, graphs, and images taken from websites or other sources for use in lectures and presentations. You must inform the audience of the original source for this information.

Use TOOLS to ASSIST in giving credit

Familiarize yourself with tools that can assist you in your efforts to give appropriate credit to others when necessary. There are several style guides that can assist you. The following are three of the most highly recommended for students and researchers. Librarians can usually assist you to find information on the style that might be most appropriate for your purposes.

Vancouver Style
Also known as Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals, this style follows rules established by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. This style is used primarily for publications in medicine, biomedicine, medical technology and allied health sciences.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (Seventh edition)
Published by the Modern Language Association, this handbook is one that is referenced by the MUN Writing Centre as an appropriate style guide for students.

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Sixth Edition)
This manual, also referenced by MUN’s Writing Centre, is a commonly used resource for writers, editors and students in the social and behavioral sciences. It offers guidance in the ethics of writing as well as detailed instruction on how to format research papers, in-text citations and reference pages. Visit: http://www.apastyle.org/

SOME EXAMPLES OF PLAGIARISM INCLUDE:

• Using someone else’s original thoughts or ideas without giving credit;
• Submitting another’s term paper, assignment, lecture or other work and claiming it as your own;
• Failing to use quotation marks when copying another’s words;
• Changing a few words but using the same idea and structure as in an original source even if you credit the author.

The Memorial University of Newfoundland calendar notes that plagiarism applies to a wide range of material including presentations, essays, laboratory reports, term papers, research results and theses. Even when sharing information in the form of slide shows, class notes or handouts and web-based documents, presenters need to ensure that they are giving credit to authors of original thoughts or ideas.

Know what PLAGIARISM LOOKS LIKE

Many people are surprised to learn that plagiarism encompasses a wide range of behaviors beyond cut and paste without credit being given to original author(s). Use of a direct quote without quotations and/or without reference to the original source is an obvious example. However, inadequate paraphrasing and extensive use of another’s ideas in the development of a new piece of work, even if credit is given, are also forms of plagiarism. Consider the following quotation:

“With the burgeoning role of distributed medical education and the increasing use of community hospitals for training purposes, challenges arise for undergraduate and postgraduate programs expanding beyond traditional tertiary care models. It is vitally important to encourage community hospitals and clinical faculty to embrace their roles in medical education for the 21st century.”


The following table provides examples of how this quote can be plagiarized (bolded words are copied verbatim from original text).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLES OF PLAGIARISM</th>
<th>HOW THIS IS WRONG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The burgeoning role of distributed medical education and the increasing use of community hospitals for training purposes bring new challenges for undergraduate and postgraduate programs expanding beyond the traditional tertiary care models.</td>
<td>Although large portions of text have been taken verbatim from the original source, the author has failed to use quotation marks or provide credit to the original authors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is vitally important to encourage community hospitals and clinical faculty to embrace their roles in assisting undergraduate and postgraduate programs to expand beyond traditional tertiary care models (Topps and Strasser 2010).</td>
<td>Although the order and some words have changed, much of the text has been copied word for word. While credit has been given to the original authors, this is an example of inadequate paraphrasing. In this instance, it would be necessary to either write the passages in bold in your own words or surround them with quotation marks. In either case, it would still be necessary to credit the authors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical education is currently shifting away from the traditional model in which clinical learning occurred almost exclusively in tertiary care institutions to one which encompasses more extensive use of distributed sites such as community hospitals. Community hospitals and clinical faculty must therefore be encouraged to assist undergraduate and postgraduate programs to move toward greater use of these sites.</td>
<td>This text constitutes a far better example of paraphrasing. However, the original authors have not been given credit for their original ideas, and the passage is therefore an example of plagiarism.</td>
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Other helpful RESOURCES

ETHICAL GUIDANCE FOR PHYSICIANS:


LEARN MORE ABOUT PLAGIARISM ON THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

MUN Department of Political Science Plagiarism Policy: http://www.mun.ca/posc/undergraduate/planning/plagiarism.php

University of Ottawa Plagiarism Brochure: http://www.uottawa.ca/plagiarism.pdf

Lesson Plan for teaching medical students about Plagiarism (University of Minnesota): http://www.research.umn.edu/ethics/curriculum/plagiarism.html

On campus WRITING SUPPORT

The Writing Centre at Memorial University of Newfoundland provides free services to all MUN students who want help with their writing. They also offer on-line support for students who are learning or working at distant sites. To learn more about how they can assist you, visit their website at: http://www.mun.ca/writingcentre/about/

Developed by the Offices of Undergraduate Medical Education, Postgraduate Medical Education, Research & Graduate Studies and Student Affairs & Services.

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Medicine