

What is Original in a Medical Research Paper?

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Short Communication

Originality is a broad concept. The term may represent essentially something very primary or starting. But it may also suggest something fresh, unusual and novel. Many journals claim to publish “original articles” [1]. But what does original mean and how to assess and assign total grader on a scientific scale? Strictly speaking, nothing is original, but generally arises from something else, which previously existed and gave birth to current paper [2,3]. At the another extreme of the spectrum stating everything is original, as no experience is completely similar to another and every patients population residing in a particular geographical region of the world may be different. An “original” research article usually provides a detailed description of scientific research activity prepared by actively involved scientists in the process of research. An article is said to be original if a manuscript is written by actual researches, also describing suitable research question or hypothesis and enlisting purpose of the research. The manuscript contains details of research methodology for actual scientific work as well as method of data collection, analysis and interpretation and elaborate possible implications of arrived outcomes.

To the best of our knowledge, currently no universal criteria are devised till date to examine, qualify and quantitatively to label them as original article and also provide a grade on scale of the originality to each submitted research article. The different reasons for qualifying as original may be the following:

1. The disease, pathological process or described entity in the article is completely new and never described or reported in the past in any existing literature i.e. the first descriptions of AIDS.

2. The population or cohort of the current study is different from other past study groups (women versus men, African -Americans versus Hispanics).

3. The new methodology was used for collect, interpretation and data analysis.

4a. The finding of the current study is contradicting result and observations of previously reported: Past studies results were considered wrong or highly questionable. Although the results of past studies were correct, however, faulty method of data collection, analysis or interpretation were utilized (applied).

4b. The findings of the current study although re-confirms the findings of the past studies, however, there were serious flaws or reasons to believe that they wouldn't be.

5. In articles describing a treatment (using either drug or device), a new indication/application/use is added to the existing utility list or study is describing newer research (changes of therapeutic dosage of medication, size, galenic form, material of a device), you are looking for a new positive effect and a negative/bad result is investigated.

We devised a “grading scale of originality”, where one point is awarded if the criterion is fulfilled and zero if the research does not comply with the item (Table 1).

If novelty present in the article	I	II	III	IV a	IV b	V
	Disease	Population	Method	Findings opposite	Findings similar but it is unexpected	If article about treatment
Yes	1	1	1	1	1	1
No	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 1: Grading scale of originality of a manuscript.

NB: IV a and IV b are mutually exclusive, and hence an article can fetch only one point, either from IV a or IV b, the final results are reported by the author. If sometime later, the author finds that the author was wrong (generally by inadequate usage of Research methodology), although the findings were considered valid at the time the manuscript preparation, submission and if such papers get published (the editors were wrong too).

Generally speaking, the author generally specifies why they consider their scientific work as original. We used the statement made by the author in most cases. When the author does not explicitly say why deem it to be original, two different reviewers can apply the Grading scale of originality and calculate the final total grade the article after assigning values in each segment of the scale from I to V columns of

grading in those article describing a drug/device is tested and otherwise only I to IV columns of grading scales are used.

Unfortunately, the level of originality of scientific publication is judged and established in the most cases by the editor and the publisher of the journal [4]. The journals usually require the originality of submissions', but article submission site does not accurately explain the meaning of original article and objective parameters for assessing and calculating grade of originality of the paper in detail by objective methods devoid of biases.

The application and usage of grading scale of originality, can go a long way to help publishers to define the concept of original paper in true sense and its application in judging the level of originality of submitted manuscripts to the journals and scientific basis to understand the concept of original paper and increasing grade of originality of their work community. This is an area of recent interest in the community and our contribution is aimed at improving the standards of scientific publication and evaluating manuscript on a

scientific grading scale. The above grading scale is being practical, easy to apply and calculate total grade for originality awarded to a particular manuscript. The grading scale of originality is easier to practice and apply both for the authors as well as editor of journal. Extensive use of grading scale can make scientific publication more practical, transparent and aimed to reduce the biases.

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