What to do if you suspect plagiarism

(b) Suspected plagiarism in a published manuscript

Check degree of copying

Clear plagiarism (unattributed use of large portions of text and/or data, presented as if they were by the plagiarist)

Minor copying of short phrases only (e.g. in discussion of research paper)

No misattribution of data

Contact corresponding author in writing, ideally enclosing signed authorship statement (or cover letter) stating that work is original and documentary evidence of plagiarism

Contact author in neutral terms expressing disappointment explaining journal’s position

Discuss publishing correction giving reference to original paper(s) if this has been omitted

Inform reader (and plagiarized author(s) if different) of journal’s actions

Inform reader of your action

Inform author(s) and tell them what you plan to do

Author responds

No response

Satisfactory explanation (honest error/journal instructions unclear/very junior researcher)

No response

Contact author’s institution requesting your concern is passed to author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance

If no response, keep contacting institution every 3–6 months

If no resolution, consider contacting other authorities, e.g. ORI in US, GMC in UK

Consider informing author’s superior and/or person responsible for research governance at author’s institution

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