

The need for extensive literature searches in order to avoid omissions

Editorials, usually published in several of our and other medical journals, have distinctive messages that may be useful to colleagues.

Over the centuries, efforts in all sectors of human activity have been recorded in the annals of history. However, even when these efforts are documented and published, their authors are not always properly remembered and cited. Although the law of priority clearly establishes criteria for how and when researchers should cite their predecessors, there are several reasons why omissions may occur. In brief, they range from well-intentioned errors, including a failure of research, negligence, and limited access to reliable sources, to premeditated deceit motivated by ego and greed. These lapses have continuously occurred in varying degrees all over the world in various activities and times. Sadly, we believe that they will continue.

These infractions occur in our specialty as well. In an editorial published in our journal, we called attention to the importance of conducting a thorough literature search before starting scientific work in order to avoid omitting citing publications of those who have previously done similar work.

However, these best practices are frequently ignored at all levels. Medical journals of every specialty in every country routinely publish letters to the editor in which authors complain that a recent article has neglected to refer to their published scientific contributions in the paper's text or bibliography. The letter is addressed to the author through the editor, in order to inform readers and register the complaint. The disagreement between the original author and the one who is alleged to have omitted a necessary reference may be mediated by the journal or handled directly by the two parties and may involve legal participation. In the medical field, as well as in others, the magic formula is simple: rigorous review of the literature is always expected of researchers. Our new journal follows this standard. There is no other way. In fact, a complaint of improper or insufficient citation is salutary both to the wronged person and to the author who made the error, who may learn to be more judicious when writing subsequent papers.

We write this editorial to record a gratifying incident that should serve as an example to all, whether or not they are active in the field of Plastic Surgery. One of the pioneers of highly advanced Plastic Surgery in Brazil, with whom we were privileged to attend conferences together and to share a friendship at the height of his activities, was Professor Jorge Fonseca Ely. Trained and qualified to work in the fields of aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, he left a pioneering scientific legacy in all sectors of the specialty and demonstrated his broad expertise through the book *Plastic Surgery*, whose second edition was published in 1980. We were privileged to have a signed copy. At the time at which it was published, there was no book on our specialty with this magnitude in Brazil. Currently, super-specialization has resulted in specific publications for each body part. The book served as a general didactic and scientific expression. However, considerable time has passed since its publication and it would not make sense to re-edit the book before updating it.

Professor Jorge Fonseca Ely's book is now a record of the development of Plastic Surgery in Brazil rather than the definitive work, but it continues to be available for referral. How many techniques have been published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century whose pioneers laid the foundations of many techniques that are currently used with refinements? Our journal published a case report, authored by Professor Fernando Passos da Rocha and colleagues, which described a flowchart documented in Professor Ely's book without the necessary bibliographic citation. The primary author, who holds a PhD, and the coauthors, who are also highly qualified, redeemed themselves with the greatest elegance and posture before the omission. This sort of occurrence is not unprecedented, either within or outside the country, but not always with the category of those who excused.

The intent of our message is to congratulate those on both sides of the complaint as such impeccable behavior is rarely recorded in the *Annals of Medicine* and beyond. Their conduct is an example to be related. We congratulate all those who were involved, and we conclude by emphasizing, once again without further comment, the importance of conducting extensive research to discover all relevant prior literature.

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Editor-in-chief