

The Kuala Lumpur Declaration – A Misattributed Authorship?

Lai-Meng Looi* and Jose Florencio Lapeña Jr.**

*Department of Pathology, University of Malaya and **Department of Otorhinolaryngology, University of the Philippines

Dear Editor,

We read with interest your Editorial published in the August 2012 issue of the Medical Journal of Malaysia (MJM) on The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Promotion of Scholarly Writing Skills and Standards in the Asia Pacific Region¹. While we congratulate you for the timeliness in informing the readership of this latest Declaration of the Asia Pacific Association of Medical Journal Editors (APAME) and affirming your Journal's support of it, and are indeed grateful for your enthusiasm in this matter, we are somewhat concerned that Indexing systems such as PubMed (PMID: 23082440 [PubMed - in process]) and scholarly networks such as ResearchGate (publication/232525909) have assigned the authorship of the Declaration to your goodself. This appears to have arisen because you used the full title of the Declaration as the title of your editorial, while reproducing the Declaration in toto in your Editorial rather than as a separate announcement acknowledging copyright to APAME, as was advised at the APAME 2012 Convention. Notwithstanding, it is clear from the text that you make no claim to authorship of the Declaration itself.

Interestingly, this is not the first such occurrence; a similar situation involves the Singapore Declaration on equitable access to health information in the Western Pacific Region which was indexed by PubMed for MEDLINE (PMID: 20954548) under the same title as an Editorial in the MJM in its December 2009 issue². It is noteworthy that in both cases, the actual Declarations which were co-published by several APAME Journals were not indexed by PubMed, even if several of these Journals are themselves indexed on PubMed.

We are well aware that publication is a fine art and the choice of words and manner of presentation of information can alter the truths we strive to connote and record. This seems to be one such unfortunate incident. On the other hand, the mechanisms by which PubMed indexes articles (including the non-indexing of the original Declarations) need to be addressed. Because "NLM does not make changes in the database in response to letters from authors or editors, unless such letters indicate that a substantive published erratum is forthcoming,"³ a clarificatory note may need to be issued by MJM to help rectify this misattribution of authorship and copyright for both Declarations. Together with this, a concerted communication by all PubMed indexed APAME Journals that co-published the original Declarations may also be necessary, so that PubMed finally indexes the published Declarations.

Indeed, your editorials may have paved the way for clearer indexing of similar Declarations by professional bodies such as APAME. We certainly hope for such a fortuitous outcome.

Disclosure: Professor LM Looi is Editor-in-Chief of the Malaysian Journal of Pathology and Chair of the Ethics and Editorial Policy Committee of APAME. Professor JF Lapeña Jr is Editor-in-Chief of the Philippine Journal of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery and Secretary-General of APAME.

REFERENCES

1. Ghee LK. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Promotion of Scholarly Writing Skills and Standards in the Asia Pacific Region. *Med J Malaysia*. 2012 Aug;67(4):357-8.
2. Arokiasamy JT. Singapore Declaration on equitable access to health information in the Western Pacific Region. *Med J Malaysia*. 2009 Dec;64(4):264-5.
3. Error Messages. PubMed Help. Available from: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK3827/#pubmedhelp.NLM_Author_Indexing. (Accessed 11 January 2013).

Reply:

The Kuala Lumpur Declaration - Correcting the Indexing of Authorship

Lim KG

Medical Journal of Malaysia, 4th Floor MMA House, 124 Jln Pahang 53000, Kuala Lumpur

Thank you for your letter concerning PubMed misattributing to me the authorship of the Kuala Lumpur declaration. If only I had the foresight to have entitled the editorial "APAME launches the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Promotion of Scholarly Writing Skills and Standards in the Asia Pacific Region" as I have done now with the erratum. It is embarrassing that as somebody who advises authors to bear in mind how indexing systems pick up their paper when they word their titles, that I should myself be caught wrong footed. If this has brought more attention to the Declaration as the Asia Pacific Association of Medical Editors (APAME) hoped for, then it is a small consolation. It is indeed intriguing, as you said, that none of the same declaration carried by other journals for both the Kuala Lumpur and Singapore Declarations had their publication indexed into PubMed. If they all had been, or my editorial had not been indexed, then the matter of misattribution of authorship might have been

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Corresponding Author: looilmm@ummc.edu.my

somewhat less noticeable. We might all benefit to learn the criteria PubMed uses to decide which articles to index. Nevertheless, the clarification concerning the authorship of the Kuala Lumpur declaration has been ably set out in the Editorial of the Malaysian Journal of Pathology¹. It was not planned this way but setting out of the origin and aspirations behind the declarations has not only enlightened me, I hope it serves to increase awareness and move the aims of the declarations forward.

REFERENCES

1. Looi LM. The Kuala Lumpur Declaration: a commitment to quality research and publication for evidence-based medical practice and policy advice. *Malays J Pathol* 2012; 34(2): 73

ERRATA

Med J Malaysia 2012; 67:357-8

The Title should read

APAME launches the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Promotion of Scholarly Writing Skills and Standards in the Asia Pacific Region.

Author's name should read : Lim KG

Med J Malaysia. 2009; 64: 264-5

The Title should read

APAME launches the Singapore Declaration on equitable access to health information in the Western Pacific Region.

Arokiasamy JT.