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Title: Citation of retracted articles: Prevention is better than cure

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Author: Raghuraman M Sethuraman M.D.1*

Affiliation:
1* Dept. of Anesthesiology.
Sree Balaji Medical College & Hospital, BIHER.
Chennai – 600044. INDIA.

Corresponding author: Raghuraman M Sethuraman

Mailing address:
Sree Balaji Medical College & Hospital, BIHER.
#7, Works Road, New colony,
Chromepet.
Chennai – 600044. INDIA.

Mobile: 91-6379141854.

E-mail: drraghuram70@gmail.com

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Citation of retracted articles: prevention is better than cure

- Letter to the Editor -

I read with immense interest the Editorial [1] that elaborated on the Editorial/peer review process in the *Korean Journal of Anesthesiology* (KJA) regarding the inclusion of a retracted article in a systematic review and meta-analysis (SRMA) published recently in KJA [2]. I greatly appreciate the vigilance of the production team of KJA for identifying this during the proof check and the efforts of the “Editorial Board” of KJA for taking a “balanced decision” after analyzing this grave issue from various angles during the review process. I greatly respect the views expressed in the “Editorial” and wish to emphasize the prevention of this perennial menace in this letter.

While I fully agree that the inclusion of the retracted article happened at an “ambiguous time” on this particular occasion, I feel that we need to carefully analyze this problem further to prevent it from happening in the future. Although it is stated in the Editorial [1] that the date of retraction of the article was September 9, 2021, it indeed was first notified on June 1, 2021 [3]. While Jo et al. [2] completed their search of the literature in May 2021 itself, they submitted their SRMA on July 26, 2021. Here, I wish to suggest that all journals can make the authors acknowledge that they have not cited any retracted article in their manuscript during submission itself and feel that this precautionary measure might have prevented this problem. I noted that one of our specialty journals is following this practice during my submission about a year ago and believe that this practice would prevent the citation of retracted articles to a greater extent.

I greatly value the suggestion of the Editorial that ensuring the included references do not contain any retracted articles should be part of the peer-review process to prevent this problem. However, I feel
that the primary responsibility lies with the authors to cross-check the current status of all the references during submission and subsequently until the publishing of their article. Although this point was mentioned in the Editorial [1], the reference cited (Reference # 7 of the Editorial [1]) was not matching for that. Grey et al. [4] focused on identifying the integrity of publications by providing a special checklist “REAPPRAISED” and problems of delay in retracting the articles after finding serious misconduct and its impact on science.

The unique feature of this problem is that happened at an “ambiguous time” that too for an article of SRMA type. It would have been relatively easier for any other type of article to make corrections at this juncture. Fortunately, it was identified at the neck of the time and the “Editorial Board” of KJA has taken incredibly great efforts to make the review process credible. I hope my suggestion in this letter would help KJA to abolish this problem completely in the future.
References


