

Resident Knowledge of Plagiarism

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Learner Audience: Anyone supervising written work or presentations made by trainees.

Background: This study characterizes the level of resident knowledge of plagiarism. If residents have low knowledge of proper citation and attribution, then explicit instruction in these practices will be a necessary addition to an academic honor code. Which is to say, we can not expect residents to follow proper academic procedure if they do not know what it is. Personal knowledge of several episodes of plagiarism in which the accused defended their actions on the basis of ignorance. These events have called into question whether proper attribution of source material really is common knowledge, even at the post-graduate level. Residents should understand and practice proper attribution of the work of others, whether it is a project only presented at their own site, presented at a regional or state meeting, or even national presentations/ publications done in collaboration with others. Work that is presented on its own merits (not copied from another source) is an important part of the instruction and evaluation of a resident. Study is meant to characterize the level of knowledge among residents at this program, and results will be used to alter content of future educational programs at this site.

Hypothesis: Most residents will understand that word for word use of another's work without attribution is unacceptable, but may not understand it to be plagiarism. Some residents will not recognize word-for-word uses without attribution as plagiarism if the source is cited in the bibliography but the quoted text is not in quotes or otherwise attributed where it is used in the document. Most residents will not understand that inappropriate paraphrasing of another's work may represent plagiarism.

Method Designs: Residents were asked to complete a survey on knowledge of plagiarism during a small-group session dealing with academic dishonesty. They were asked to describe a presentation excerpt as "OK", "UNACCEPTABLE", or "PLAGIARISM" while looking at the source text. Answers were tallied anonymously.

Outcome: 3 out of the 23 respondents failed to recognize an example of word-for-word plagiarism when the source text was not in the bibliography.

8 of the 26 recognized an example of word-for-word plagiarism when the source material was in the bibliography but there was no other indication of what part of the excerpt represented the author's true work. 10 residents did not recognize it as plagiarism, but found it "unacceptable", and 8 residents felt that this represented acceptable use of source material.

Finally, only 1 resident felt that an inappropriately paraphrased excerpt was plagiarism, 7 felt it was "unacceptable", and 18 felt it was "ok".