

Letters to the editor

Submit your Letters to the Editor via the online submission system: <https://mts-bdj.nature.com/cgi-bin/main.plex>. Priority will be given to letters less than 500 words long. Authors must sign the letter, which may be edited for reasons of space.

Scientific research

Possible malpractice by researchers

Sir, as an internationally connected researcher, I have seen a rather alarming increase in malpractice, which has intensified since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ I am concerned by the attribution of co-authorship in scientific articles to researchers from low-income countries in exchange for a full waiver of article processing charges (APCs).

Seeking to circumvent the payment of APCs, a significant number of researchers affiliated with universities in high- and medium-income countries have sought partnerships that must be substantially negatively impacting the concept of good scientific practices. I clearly understand that in this context there must be malpractice on both sides, that is both from researchers who do not wish to pay what is due from them, as well as from pseudo authors who have not contributed anything to the work performed and accept to be listed as 'true authors'. Such a somewhat dishonest and harmful practice for science is becoming more and more routine in the scientific universe of the field of health.

As we all know, there are editorial commissioning programmes that invite respected researchers to publish for free, different journals that still offer the traditional subscription publishing model, opportunities for waivers in publication fee as well as open access journals without APCs. Therefore, the issue of paying APCs should not be an acceptable justification for this type of malpractice. If, on the one hand, scientific collaboration has been of great importance and contributed to the achievement of valuable exchanges of knowledge and the conception of higher quality manuscripts, on the other hand, this cannot be a way to deceive publishers

and unfairly compete with researchers who value the reputation of their universities and the suitability of science. Considering this, it is expected that publishers, editors and scientific rankings take urgent and timely measures in order to eradicate the advance of this misleading and fateful manoeuvre, and thus continue to promote and strengthen the appreciation of good practices in the scientific field.

M. R. Tovani-Palone, Chennai, India

References

1. Shamsoddin E, Sofi-Mahmudi A, Natoli V, Franchi T, Tovani-Palone M R. Halting 'research waste'. *Br Dent J* 2021; **231**: 317–318.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-023-5514-5>

Dental memberships

Updating postnominals

Sir, on behalf of the College of General Dentistry (CGDent) I wish to encourage former members and fellows of the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) (FGDP[UK]), together with colleagues who have recently joined CGDent, to update their postnominals.

While honours and university degree postnominals may normally be used throughout life, the use of postnominals linked to membership and fellowship of colleges, academies and other bodies, including memberships and fellowships earned by examination and assessment, is more complex.

CGDent has issued guidance on the continuing use of FGDP(UK) postnominals (<https://cgdent.uk/use-of-fgdp-postnominals/>). This guidance states that, while postnominals relating to diplomas awarded by FGDP(UK) and the Royal College of Surgeons of England (Dip MFGDP[UK], Dip FFGDP[UK], Dip MJDF, DGD[RCS Eng], Dip MGDS[RCS Eng], Dip

ImpDent[RCS Eng] and Dip RestDent[RCS Eng]) were not affected by the transfer of FGDP(UK) into CGDent, postnominals which conveyed ongoing membership or fellowship of FGDP(UK), ie, MFGDP(UK) and FFGDP(UK), should no longer be used, as FGDP(UK) no longer exists. The only exceptions to these arrangements are honorary memberships and fellowships of FGDP(UK), ie, Hon MFGDP(UK) and Hon FFGDP(UK), which are honours rather than denoting ongoing, substantive membership.

Continuing use of the redundant, membership-specific FGDP(UK) postnominals – MFGDP(UK) and FFGDP(UK) – could be considered misleading, specifically to patients, and to contravene the GDC's guidance on advertising. Equally, failure to use recently acquired CGDent postnominals (MCGDent, Assoc FCGDent and FCGDent) contributes to the unhelpful misunderstanding that dentistry continues to lack its own independent standards setting body. In addition, it fails to convey to other healthcare professions and, more importantly patients, standing and a commitment to the CGDent code of conduct and, in turn, the standards established and promoted by the College.

In updating their postnominals, former members and fellows of FGDP(UK), who have not yet joined CGDent, may replace their redundant FGDP(UK) postnominals with CGDent postnominals by joining the College (<https://cgdent.uk/join/>) – former members and fellows of FGDP(UK) being eligible for MCGDent and FCGDent, respectively. In this process, there is opportunity for former members of FGDP(UK), who have obtained experience and postgraduate qualifications since obtaining their FGDP(UK)/RCS Eng diploma to apply for Associate Fellowship (Assoc FCGDent) or even Fellowship (FCGDent) of the College 'by experience'