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### Rare Courage against a Sadly Less Rare Occurrence

**To the Editor:** The Kurjak plagiarism case, and the current debate about its handling, offer research institutions around the world an opportunity for continued learning. Before exploring this – we comment on the current situation in Croatia. First and foremost it seems entirely clear that the forces of openness – the Editors of the *Croatian Medical Journal* and the contributors to the public debates in *BMJ* and elsewhere – do a service to everyone when they place the evidence and international norms before the university and the public (1).

At the University of Zagreb, the proper authorities surely need to reopen the case. They need to consider the adequacy of the record that was placed before its Court of Honor. They also need to look at how the university manages such proceedings, so that it may complete its deliberations in a manner consistent with international

norms. The current situation is most unfortunate. The university has compounded initial misjudgments and/or criminal acts by Professor Kurjak, one of its senior faculty; acts committed before his recent retirement. We agree with those who have already said that this university's failure puts at risk all those at the University of Zagreb who pursue science honorably.

An opportunity emerges from this sad case, one that could benefit many institutions supporting higher education and research (including journals). Think of the Kurjak case as an incomplete case study, deserving careful and complete data collection and analysis. Would it not be an important addition to the international literature? Authors of such a case study might consider questions, including:

- When in his training, and how did Professor Kurjak learn – or when and how did he have

the exposure to and opportunity to learn – the principles and significance of plagiarism?

- What was the context during the years when Professor Kurjak was coming of age as a scientist and medical professional – and is the history of this case pertinent to how new generations can learn to respect the intellectual output of colleagues from whom they are learning? (We hope they will learn not to misappropriate colleagues' work.)

- What are the lessons from this case study for researchers and academic institutions around the world? Perhaps they are most important in parts of the world where independence from political pressures is new; or places where other fundamental elements of a healthy environment for science have not been present.

- Is it possible to identify lessons for those who must enforce rules against plagiarism and scientific fraud (2)? We mean les-

sons that go beyond Professor Kurjak's personal characteristics that may have led him to continue his misconduct, even after at least one instance was brought to judgment (3).

The *Croatian Medical Journal* is well known and respected for its contribution to the education of scientists from developing countries. Its editors encourage young scientists by working closely with them through the editorial process. Many of us value learning from their example. Might some interested parties (in Croatia or from else-

where) complete this case study and share the findings and lessons for all of us who work with students from the time they are first introduced to these fundamental concepts?

Might this contribute to both full disclosure, and, eventually, to a reasonable closure for at least one sad case?

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**Thanking the *Croatian Medical Journal* for Providing a Model of High Editorial Standards**

**To the Editor:** We write to extend the support of the Council of the association Mediterranean Editors and Translators to the *Croatian Medical Journal (CMJ)* at this difficult time in which the journal's editorial independence is under attack (1). The situation takes us very much

by surprise because the *CMJ* is held in high esteem in our region and around the world as an exemplary journal publishing research from the "scientific periphery."

Many of our editors are copyeditors or board editors for similar journals and we con-

sider the *CMJ*'s innovation of a novel "author-helpful" policy (involving instructive interventions) to be the gold standard for small journals published in English from non-Anglophone settings. We are sorry to see that colleagues on the editors' home turf do not seem to be aware of