

Correcting the literature



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We make important therapeutic decisions based on the best available evidence, and it is important to correct the literature when the results are in question. Appropriate actions may include publication of a correction, links to previously cited data to avoid double counting of outcomes, expressions of concern about study methods or integrity, and retraction of a published article. Corrections should be published as soon as possible, appear in a prominent position on a numbered page in the journal that originally published the article, and include the complete original citation to help ensure that an appropriate reference to the published erratum will be added to the MEDLINE citation. A retracted work should still be searchable, but should bear a clear indication that it was retracted along with a statement regarding why the retraction occurred. Others may have acted upon the published data, and therefore it is important that corrections are appropriately visible and that the work does not simply disappear from literature searches.

Articles may be retracted or withdrawn based on a request from the authors, the academic institution where the work was completed, the study sponsor, the editor, or publisher, often because of a pervasive error or irreproducible data. Retraction of an article does not necessarily mean the data are invalid, but common reasons for retraction include discovery of an honest error, plagiarism, duplicate publication, overlap of data sets, and unethical research methods.^{1,2} Software programs such as iThenticate (Turnitin, Oakland, CA) are now commonly used to detect overlap with previously published work and may result in a decrease in duplicate publication.³ While these programs represent a step forward, arbitrary selection of percentage of overlap as a

basis for screening may flag legitimate use of quoted data and may fail to detect real plagiarism.⁴

Ultimately, responsibility for the honest conduct and reporting of research lies with each author, their institutions, and the sponsor. Both the authors and sponsor should agree to share original data if questions arise regarding the integrity of the work. In some cases, a member of the study team or the sponsor raises questions about the study and other members of the team disagree. In such case, the editor should be alerted. The Committee on Publication Ethics can provide helpful guidance, as can policy statements from the Council of Science Editors, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, the World Association of Medical Editors, the US Public Health Service Office of Research Integrity, and the US Public Health Service Office of Research. Bottom line: We take great pains to help ensure the accuracy of material published in the *JAAD* and invite authors to submit their best work—working together we can help improve outcomes for patients with diseases of the skin.

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