

# Bengal Journal of Otolaryngology and Head Neck Surgery

Official Publication of The Association of Otolaryngologists of India, West Bengal

Volume 27 No. 1 - April, 2019

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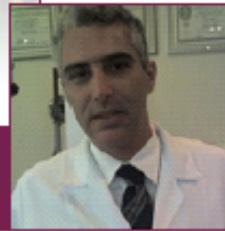
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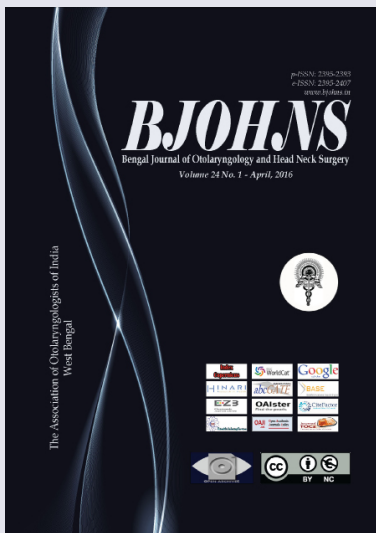


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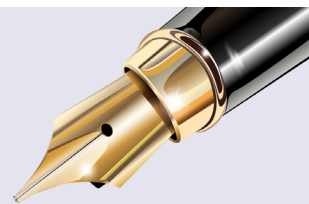
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# From the Desk of the Editor



Marcus Munafo, a biological psychologist at the University of Bristol, UK, as a student, tried to replicate some simple studies from literature, but failed. His confidence suffered a huge dent as a consequence. He started questioning and found that his experience was not uncommon.<sup>1</sup> Have you too not had a similar experience? Hasn't some surgical procedure or therapeutic protocol which was supposed to have a very good outcome failed to satisfy your expectations?

The idea that the same experiment will always produce the same result, no matter who performs it, is one of the cornerstones of science's claim to truth.<sup>2</sup> The reproducibility crisis gave rise to the suspicion that a lot of published research findings may be false.<sup>3</sup>

Nature's survey (2016) found that 'more than 70% of researchers have tried and failed to reproduce another scientist's experiments, and more than half have failed to reproduce their own experiments.'<sup>1</sup> Another study found that at least 50% of life science research cannot be replicated.<sup>2</sup> However, the exact extent of the malady is difficult to fathom. 'Forty four percent of scientists who have carried out an unsuccessful replication are unable to publish it.'<sup>1</sup>

Fabrication, falsification, plagiarism and cooking or mining of data (with the intention to deceive) are generally considered as scientific misconduct. Misconduct in clinical, pharmacological and medical research is more widespread than in other fields.<sup>4</sup> There is suspicion that large financial interests, that often drive medical research, are severely biasing it and may have serious implications on human health.<sup>4</sup>

The waste of financial resources is colossal; to the tune of US\$ 28,000,000,000 per year on irreproducible pre-clinical research in the US alone.<sup>5</sup>

So why can't we trust the academic journals to tell the scientific truth? There is apprehension that academic journals might not select articles for publication on their scientific quality alone. The main reason for the spread of 'fake news' in scientific journals may be the tremendous pressure in the academic system to publish in the high-impact journals and such journals demand novel and surmising results to survive in the competitive market.<sup>2</sup>

Hwang Woo-Suk and Haruko Obokata's publications on stem cell research along with Yoshitaka Fujii and Joachim Boldt's research publications on anaesthesiology shows how easy it is for a scientist to publish fabricated data in prestigious journals.

The scientific community must take an initiative now to restore faith in the outcome of scientific research and stop spread of fake news in academic publications. I agree with The Guardian when it said that it's time for academics to take back control of research journals.

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