Scientific misconduct includes unethical publication practices such as plagiarism and duplicate publication. Plagiarism of text is defined as copying a portion of text from another source without giving credit to its author and without enclosing the source text in quotation marks when using verbatim text.

Dr. Mazze discovered that plagiarism of his work appeared to have occurred and brought this to our attention. In his letter, Dr. Mazze raises important ethical issues in scientific publishing. In response, Dr. Mengden admits that sections of text describing methodology were directly transcribed from Dr. Mazze’s paper and acknowledges the importance of Dr. Mazze’s methodology in the design of his own studies. In addition, Dr. Mengden has formally apologized to Dr. Mazze. No further action will be taken by the American Journal of Hypertension to withdraw Dr. Mengden’s paper, because although quotations were not used to identify use of verbatim text, the source publication was cited and the intent did not appear to be fraudulent.

Unfortunately, the context in which Dr. Mazze’s article was cited failed to convey its importance to Dr. Mengden’s study.

Plagiarism and other forms of scientific misconduct erode the foundation upon which advances in medicine and science are built. Peer review is the first line of defense against this problem, followed by a clear editorial policy. Accordingly, the policy of the American Journal of Hypertension is to reject any manuscript in which plagiarism, multiple publications of data, or other forms of scientific misconduct are discovered during the review process. If unethical practices are discovered after publication, the title and authors of the fraudulent article will be published in a subsequent issue of the journal, the nature of the infraction described, and the publication withdrawn. Other measures to bar future publication by those authors in the American Journal of Hypertension may also be taken. Ultimately, however, responsibility for maintaining the highest ethical standards remains with the authors.