

(3.3) Manuscript based on earlier conference abstract

You are preparing a paper for journal submission that is based upon work that you previously presented in abstract form at a major national meeting. The society that sponsors the meeting at which the abstract was presented copyrights its annual meeting abstracts, and the abstract was included within conference proceedings released by the society. You are therefore concerned regarding the present manuscript submission based on the earlier abstract. How shall you best proceed?

Commentary

Societies differ regarding potential copyright of abstract presentations at society meetings. Some societies do not copyright or formally publish presented abstracts, such that the authors maintain the copyright to the presented material. In other circumstances, a society may require that authors transfer to the society the copyright to the abstract (whether delivered as an oral presentation or as a traditional or electronic poster), therefore impacting the authors' future options regarding publication of a full manuscript based on the work within a peer-reviewed journal. In the event that the society does copyright its abstracts, then the authors should not subsequently submit for publication a full manuscript based on the same, or highly similar, work without becoming aware of the society's policy regarding prior meeting abstracts. This may require contacting the society to clarify its policy. Some societies will routinely provide authors the permission to submit a manuscript based on the abstract to a journal of their choosing as long as the earlier abstract presentation is acknowledged. In other cases, the society may require that the manuscript first be submitted to a journal sponsored by the society, in essence providing the society with the right-to-first-refusal of the manuscript. Regardless of whether or not the society copyrights its previously presented abstracts, authors should disclose the prior abstract presentation to the journal to which a subsequent manuscript is submitted, indicating the current copyright status of the abstract and, if relevant, any permissions received. Some journals also require that the authors provide a copy of the previously presented abstract along with the submitted manuscript. In addition, some journals may consider a lengthy previously published abstract (for instance, a length of substantially more than 300 words), to be the basis of a redundant publication, irrespective of potential granting of permission from the abstract copyright holder. (On the other hand, should the work undergo substantive expansion following abstract submission, with such expansion leading to unique findings, then the subsequent manuscript based on the expanded investigation may be deemed a distinct work in comparison with the initial abstract submission and not representing redundant publication.)

The above factors should be taken into consideration at the time that an abstract itself is first submitted. Societies typically make the relevant policy clearly available on their website, and authors should become familiar with the copyright policies of societies to which they elect to submit an abstract. If it is anticipated that the copyright transfer to the society on account of the abstract presentation may create a conflict at the time of subsequent manuscript preparation, then it may be appropriate to choose to forgo the abstract submission.

References

- 1) AMA Manual of Style Committee. AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors (10th edition). Oxford University Press, March 2007.
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<http://www.arrs.org/uploadedFiles/ARRS/Publications/authorGuidelines.pdf>
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- 3) Radiology. Radiology Publication Information for Authors.
<http://pubs.rsna.org/page/radiology/pia> Accessed: December 23, 2015.
- 4) Berquist TH. Potential Author Misconduct: The Education Continues. AJR 2015;204:229-30.
- 5) Berquist TH. The copyright transfer agreement: we sign it, but do we understand it? AJR 2009; 192:849–851.