

Title:

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DOI: 10.17235/reed.2022.8760/2022

Link: [PubMed \(Epub ahead of print\)](#)

Please cite this article as:

Jiang Jiao, Lü Muhan, Tang Xiaowei. Analysis of retracted articles in the field of Gastroenterology. Rev Esp Enferm Dig 2022. doi: 10.17235/reed.2022.8760/2022.

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Analysis of retracted articles in the field of gastroenterology

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Conflict of interest: the authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions: study concept and design: all authors. Data curation: Jiao Jiang. Drafting of the manuscript: Jiao Jiang and Muhan Lü. Critical revision of the manuscript: Muhan Lü and Xiaowei Tang.

Keywords: Retractions. Gastroenterology. Research misconduct. Retraction Watch.

Dear Editor,

Retrospection of retracted articles has important implications for research into the ethics of academic publishing. A study reviewed all retracted articles in the field of biomedical and life science research as of May 2012 and found that over two thirds were retracted due to misconduct (1). Research in gastroenterology is an important component of the biomedical literature. This study aimed to describe the characteristics of retracted papers in the field of gastroenterology by searching the special database, Retraction Watch. Retractions originally published from January 1980 to July 2021 were included.

A total of 583 retracted articles were included for analysis; 76 % of all retractions were retracted since 2015. Over half were focused on digestive system neoplasms,

especialmente cáncer colorrectal, cáncer gástrico y carcinoma hepatocelular, mientras que la otra mitad se basó en trastornos no neoplásicos. Dado que existe un amplio espectro de enfermedades del sistema digestivo, clasificamos las retractaciones según los órganos involucrados (Tabla 1). La nomenclatura desarrollada por Retraction Watch para registrar las razones de retractación es elaborada. Por lo tanto, las razones proporcionadas por Retraction Watch se dividieron en un número de tipos principales. El problema de confiabilidad fue la razón detrás del 37.7 % de todas las retractaciones. La duplicación y el plagio se contabilizaron por el 27.4 % de las retractaciones (Tabla 1).

Se observó un aumento en el número de retractaciones en los últimos años en nuestro estudio. Podría atribuirse parcialmente al creciente número de publicaciones y a una mayor tasa de detección de estudios defectuosos debido a regulaciones más estrictas por parte de la comunidad académica y los gobiernos.

El tiempo de retraso entre la publicación y la retractación también debe considerarse (2). Las malignancias mencionadas anteriormente son problemas de salud pública importantes y causas principales de muerte relacionada con el cáncer (3,4). Considerando los esfuerzos resultantes para abordar estos desafíos, deducimos que el gran número de retractaciones se debió a muchas publicaciones centradas en estos temas.

Con respecto a las razones de retractación, el conflicto de intereses es un tema importante de preocupación (5), aunque solo tres artículos fueron retractados por declarar incorrectamente los conflictos de intereses. Dado que un artículo podría ser retractado por cometer diferentes tipos de malconducta simultáneamente, no es razonable sumar los porcentajes para determinar el grado de malconducta por parte de los autores. Sin embargo, el hecho de que solo un cuarto de ellas se debió a errores indirectamente reflejó que una proporción considerable de estas publicaciones fueron retractadas debido a malconducta.

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Table 1. Distribution of fields and reasons for retraction of articles

| Characteristics | Number of retractions, n (%) |
|---|------------------------------|
| <i>Field</i> | |
| <i>Digestive system neoplasms</i> | 297 (50.9) |
| Colorectal cancer | 79 (13.6) |
| Gastric cancer | 71 (12.2) |
| Hepatocellular carcinoma | 68 (11.7) |
| Other types of neoplasms | 79 (13.6) |
| <i>Non-neoplastic disorders</i> | 286 (49.1) |
| Gastrointestinal tract | 124 (21.3) |
| Liver | 71 (12.2) |
| Biliary tract | 17 (2.9) |
| Gut microbiota | 16 (2.7) |
| Pancreas | 10 (1.7) |
| Other | 48 (8.2) |
| <i>Reasons for retraction*</i> | |
| Reliability [†] | 220 (37.7) |
| Investigation [‡] | 186 (31.9) |
| Duplication/self-plagiarism [§] | 160 (27.4) |
| Plagiarism | 122 (20.9) |
| Error by author | 118 (20.2) |
| Limited information [¶] | 97 (16.6) |
| Lack of approval or informed consent | 78 (13.4) |
| Falsification/fabrication ^{**} | 74 (12.7) |
| Compromised peer review | 63 (10.8) |
| Paper mill | 30 (5.1) |
| Error from journal/publisher | 23 (3.9) |
| Other misbehavior by author ^{††} | 164 (28.1) |
| Others | 100 (17.2) |

*An article could be retracted for many reasons as defined by the Retraction Watch, and not all reasons were included in the table. [†]Concerns/issues about data, image,

results and referencing/attributions. Unreliable data, image and results and the results were not reproducible. [‡]Investigation by journal/publisher, company/institution, third party or United State Office of Research Integrity (ORI). [§]Duplication of image, article, text or data, and euphemisms for duplication. ^{||}Error in data, image, methods, analyses, text, materials, results and/or conclusions. [¶]Notice with limited or no information or unable to access via current resources, or lack of notice. Date of retraction/other unknown and upgrade/update of prior notice. ^{**}Falsification/fabrication of data, image, or results and manipulation of image, or results. ^{††}Other types of misconduct that do not fall into the classifications described above.