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Citations, citations everywhere but did anyone read the paper?

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Dear Editor,

I write regarding a recent publication in *Colloids and Surfaces B: Biointerfaces*: Spectroscopic investigation on the binding of antineoplastic drug oxaliplatin to human serum albumin and molecular modeling. *Colloids and Surfaces B*: 69 (2009) 51–57, by authors Yue, Yuanyuan; Chen, Xingguo; Qin, Jin and Yao, Xiaojun.

The authors cited a publication of mine in *Cancer Treatment Reviews* (33(4)347–357), and have significantly misrepresented the findings. My paper is titled *Oxaliplatin for the treatment of cisplatin-resistant cancer: a systematic review* [1]. The objective of the publication was to systematically review platinum-resistant cell lines and clinical trials using oxaliplatin to see if there is any evidence to support the commonly held view that oxaliplatin is active in cisplatin-resistant cancer. The systematic review found that there was little evidence to support the use of oxaliplatin in cisplatin-resistant cancer and concluded that the two drugs are actually cross-resistant at clinically relevant levels of resistance. The purpose of my publication was to change current opinion on the activity of oxaliplatin. Consequently, I have been interested in the studies that cite my publication to see if opinion is changing. I have been disappointed to find that the exact opposite has been occurring; people are using my article as a reference to support the existing view.

Yue *et al.* have used the statement “Oxaliplatin has been widely accepted as potentially useful for the treatment of cisplatin-resistant cancer” and then referenced my paper. The first line of the abstract of my paper is “Oxaliplatin is widely regarded as being active in cisplatin-resistant cancer” which I was using as an introductory statement. It appears as though the Yue *et al.* did not read past the first line of the abstract or even read my conclusion which was “Oxaliplatin therefore should not be considered broadly active in cisplatin-resistant cancer”. If Yue *et al.* wish to publish that oxaliplatin is useful for the treatment of cisplatin-resistant cancer; they are perfectly within their rights to do so as it is current opinion. However, they should not use my paper as the reference as it concludes the exact opposite.

I published this paper in 2007 and so far it has been cited ten times. I should be pretty happy with this, as it looks rather nice on my CV. However, this is not the first time that misinformation has been cited. Out of the ten papers that have cited my study, three appear to have cut and pasted or paraphrased statements out of context [2-4]. Is this my fault for writing a poor article? I'm not sure that it is. I'm sure all manuscripts contain individual sentences that when taken out of context may contradict the findings of the study. I will be much more careful in the future that the opening line of any of my manuscripts could not be misinterpreted in isolation. I should probably be thankful for the power of search engines such as Google to allow people to find my papers in the first place. However, it also allows people to quickly find an isolated sentence that appears to support their preconceptions.

I humbly ask everyone to go back to first principles. Yes we are all busy people, trying to publish important work with tight deadlines. We should all remember that before we cite a paper, at absolute minimum we should read the abstract, read the conclusion and look at the figures which support the statement we are making.

Britta Stordal

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