

Don't be misled by citation figures! (10)

## Good Old Pals

The "Sirman fraud case" had caused an incredible stir, indeed, the whole system was challenged. And no wonder, one of the most debated points were honorary authorships. Wasn't it true that too many were included in the author's lists due to their respective position alone, particularly in clinical medicine? Didn't most of the "bosses" demand in advance that they be listed on each and every one of their subordinates' papers, although they contributed next to nothing in many cases?

"Of course, that's how it went," Turnwind thought. He had experienced this himself for years. Even today, he gets angry when thinking about Vainter, his former boss. He was noted on each of Turnwind's papers, although he hadn't even taken a glimpse at most of them. Fortunately, those days had long since passed when, five years ago, Turnwind himself was made clinical director and silently vowed never to become like Vainter.

However, things developed quite differently. Soon, Turnwind found less and less time to at least listen to the reports about the research projects in his department. "How can I obtain sufficient papers in this way?" he asked himself. Everybody knows how rapidly one's reputation can be lost; suddenly being considered as an unproductive "old fart", whose good old days have also gone with the wind, so what next...?



Hence, Turnwind also started forcing his co-workers to always include his name on their papers. "So what, I was a victim myself for long enough," he salvaged his conscience. "No paper without Turnwind" became common practice in his department.

Despite this drastic measure, Turnwind's "case" only showed a slight improvement. Although he had effectively arranged to be on everything leaving his department, the contents of these were at best mediocre. Could it be that he had failed to select the best candidates as his staff?

An unexpected phone call came to his rescue. It was from Twistham, his old pal from the days at Vainter's lab, who had since climbed a steep career ladder at MadMed Pharma. He now led the company's global research into liver diseases and was currently developing a promising drug against hepatitis. The reason for his call was that he was looking for "competent clinical researchers with a good reputation" to form the scientific steering committee of a broadly-funded clinical multi-centre study. Well, at this point Turnwind sprang to mind...

Of course, Turnwind agreed. Not least, because he instantly understood what that would mean. Not too much work, just providing a few patients, a little clinical infrastructure and culminating in a prominent position on the author's list in the final report paper. And should the drug really make an impact...

During the first two years after its appearance, the paper was cited more than 500 times. Turnwind was ninth to last of 112 authors but that didn't bother him at all. Most important was that every time he entered "Turnwind FL" into the citation database, the ever-increasing number caused his gleeful smile to broaden even wider. It was in moments like this that he rubbed his hands together and thought it was about time to get out for another beer with good old Twistham.

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