

What it Takes to be the Father of a Subject?

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Abstract: Father of the subject or a field is a title given to an individual who is known to have given the first new important contribution to that discipline either through invention, discovery or laying down foundational principle that makes them distinct. However, in recent era, it is observed that there is breach in this system and individuals are being blindly or wrongly being labelled to be father's without having any evidence of innovations/discoveries/foundational principles in that subject. Few individuals, especially in medical field have bizarre reasons and criteria's attributed to them, for being called Father of the field. This has led to raise in Pseudo-fathers globally and has undermined the contribution of the original Fathers of the subject who have done discoveries or innovations. Disappointingly, many of them who are being called father of the subject, especially in medical field, don't even have any contribution to the subject, yet they are being propagated as Father's by their followers or students or association members. This article briefly highlights on criteria's that makes one the Father of the field and also the disturbing trends.

Keywords: Literature Confusion, Father, Eponym, Stigler's Law, Amit Jain's Triad.

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INTRODUCTION

There have been numerous experts globally in different streams of subjects like science, mathematics, literature, etc who have contributed to their respective subjects immensely that led to the growth of their subject.

The same exists even in field of medicine wherein the medical practitioners since ancient period have been involved in discoveries and inventions.

With different professionals being credited with different titles, the "**Father**" of the Subject/Field (or Mother in case of females), that is often bestowed by researchers and academician's to those individuals who have laid down or have been credited to have given foundational principles to that particular field [1]. The contribution of such individuals is substantial ranging from development or original invention to establishing new principles which is first in that field. These individuals are credited to have innovated new ways or original Idea's that established the field's framework. Ranging from eponymous work [2, 3], to non-

eponymous work, these individuals work is so significant with evidences that they are often delineated among the rest. Being called Father of the subject, is a level 2 of the eponymic reward system as per Merton who briefed about 3 different hierarchic order of eponymous practice [4].

The term Father had been used in view of male being prominent in the field centuries ago, but decades later the term Mother has become a counterpart when women started entering and contributing in their field equally with original inventions and innovations being done for first time.

However, a disturbing trend is noticed in this new era, wherein there has been a breach in this policy by many individuals and groups for varied reasons.

The author provides some of the essential highlights for one to understand the age old policy. Table 1 shows few of the appropriate Inclusion criteria's and also wrong reasons (Exclusion Criteria's) for a person to be bestowed upon the title of "Father" especially with a focus on medical field.

Table 1: Showing criteria's for an individual to be bestowed with Title of Father in their Field

Acceptable Criteria	Non-acceptable Criteria's or Inappropriate reason's
Development of series of new Innovations/ techniques for their field (not just one innovation)	Being first to open an Association or Society in that field
Laid Down the foundational Principles in that subject or field	Being first to get a degree/certificate in that subject
	Holding conferences or CME's frequently in that subject
	Holding important position in that field like being head of the Institution or president of an Association
	Being a popular postgraduate teacher or regular examiner in that subject
	Being a constant speaker/good speaker/Presenter or Good Clinician /Surgeon or one who has good practice
	Presenting or publishing regularly other person's original work or research with their data
	Having more presentation or papers in that field or more degree's in that subject
	Having more number of orations or more number of awards in that field
	Having opened the department or hospital or clinics first in their region or cities
	Performing already established techniques or methods with advance technologies and speed
	Plagiarised innovations /techniques/systems
	Modifier's or Additioners
	Being teacher of the original innovator

THE PSEUDO-FATHER'S

Naming the concept or the discovery after its discoverer or the innovator or to honor that scientist has been very common tradition in most field [5]. Eponyms have been in existence for diseases, model, laws, theories, system, numbers, etc [5]. With advent of internet, there has been ease to identify the original innovators or inventors with date, time and region which was difficult in earlier years and one wouldn't know for decades who was the original innovator or developer and this resulted in wrong people being credited for work that they never did originally and now such individuals being identified to be Pseudo-Father's. Surprisingly, there are individuals who have no evidential contribution to the subject [Table 1- exclusion criteria] but often being wrongly labelled as Father's and this is often seen being done by many including associations and its members, students, pharma companies or individuals who gets benefit but there is no supportive evidence to such claims. This so called "Pick up Father's" done by above for their benefits actually are "Pseudo-Father's" and if one search literature, they will find many in their field who have no innovations or development of principles and practices yet being misattributed. This is contrary to the earlier belief that it is rare for eponyms to be attached to individuals who have not made important contribution to the science connected with discoveries [4]. In fact, today it is very common to see the breach in the policy of naming Father's in their field and it is given to individuals randomly at own whims and fancies even when individual has not done any innovative work or laid any principles and practice. As mentioned by Stigler [4], eponyms being awarded by students, close friends or by

political associates (like those in medical associations and society in today's scenario) are not successful if there is no supportive evidence of invention or discoveries. Such individuals often end up being pseudo-fathers.

An essential point that needs to be highlighted is that introducing a technique or method after learning from the original pioneer or innovator who already performed it first time and then repeating that in their respective cities or state or country does not confer one to be the Father of the subject in his state or country, a disturbing trend noticed in many states and countries leading to raise in Pseudo-fathers globally who were never the original inventors or the ones who did it first in their field and there-by undermining the efforts of the original innovators.

A myth exists among many professionals who thinks that if the method or technique is introduced in their cities or country, then that person becomes the father of that field in his city or country, and this is misattribution. Just imagine there being 100's of countries and 1000's of states/cities in the world, one cannot be Father of a subject in that field because he did it in their city without them being original innovators or inventors. In such cases we shall have thousands' of Father's (Pseudo-father's to be precise) per subject or topic globally with all of them not having any innovations or discoveries.

THE LITERATURE CONFUSION AND STIGLER'S LAW OF EPONYMY

Two concepts the author would like to highlight, that is relevant to this article, is the literature confusion and Stigler's law of eponymy. Literature confusion [6] is a term coined by the author which means providing an incorrect data/information in the research field that gets widely disseminated and people assume it to be true.

Stigler's Law of eponymy states that '*No scientific discoveries is named after its original discoverer*' [4]. It is often noticed in history, that credit or names are not given to the original discoverers and many things have been wrongly attributed to wrong people, often to those who present these discoveries.

It is also seen that many scientist/researchers, are actually aware of the original innovator or discoverer, but are known to credit wrong people for varied reasons including personal gains especially seen in associations/societies and by pharma companies. With advent of internet, technologies and awareness of copyrights, things did change in present era wherein one can identify the original innovators and inventors, but equally it has given a rise in literature confusion, academic dishonesty and plagiarism [7].

Another trend that is being noticed for decades is that if one person constantly presents or publishes on a particular topic or technique which he didn't originally innovate, people wrongly attribute him to be Father of

that field though he neither innovated nor did it first in the world.

MATTHEW EFFECT

Matthew effect, also called as Cumulative advantage, refers to a phenomena wherein a person with more resources tends to get more credit or higher recognition in comparison to a person with less resources or less well known person for the same work [8, 9]. Merton had coined the term "Matthew Effect" [10].

The Matthew effect is quite visible in research publications, academic funding, scientific conferences, promotions, etc in field of sciences [9]. The best known example seen in scientific conferences is the plenary lectures/talks being held by more prominent speakers [8], whether they are good or not, whether they are academician or not, whether they were the original author or not. Further, with sad state of affairs in conferences and rise in politics seen in scientific associations with groupism among doctors and scientist pertaining to their speciality and degree's, the Matthew effect seems to dominate and original innovators being subdued.

Often, this Matthew effect could be a reason for confusing a person to be a Father of the subject, even when he has no known significant original contribution that can be supported with evidences.

In fact, the triad (Amit Jain's Triad) of Stigler's Law, Literature Confusion and Matthew effect (Figure 1) combine together creates a deception leading to rise in Pseudo- Father's.

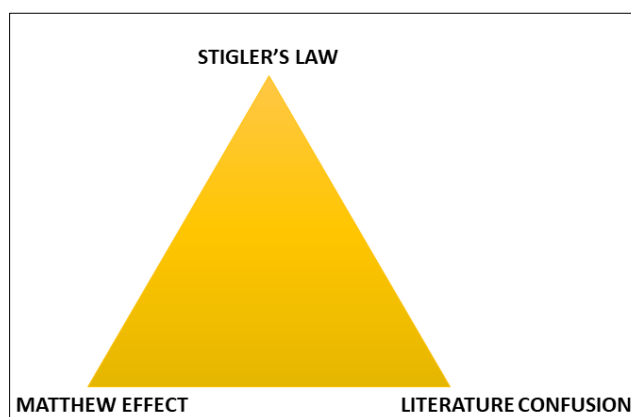


Figure 1: Amit Jain's Triad

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The 3 commonly known "cardinal sins" of scientific misconduct are plagiarism, data falsification and data fabrication [11]. Plagiarism is one of the biggest growing menace in the scientific community and it refers to stealing some-one else work or idea's and pass off as one's own without crediting the original source [12]. It is often noticed that plagiarism is the shortest way to get recognition and many are involved in it thereby taking the undue credit and having false eponym's attached to

it. Many innovation begins with an idea. Plagiarism of ideas however are often detected by experts and researchers in that particular field [12]. The author has noticed that many of the original pioneers, innovators and Fathers of the subject, have history of their eponymous work being plagiarised by someone else but it is often too late to for the original innovator to get the due recognition by which time the plagiarist would have enjoyed the legacy and fame in his scientific group. The prevalence of plagiarism is rising in the scientific

community ranging from 0.2%-49.4% [11]. The academic dishonesty that includes plagiarism, falsification of data, presentations, etc are challenging problems that original researchers are facing in the modern era.

CONCLUSION

Bestowing the title of Father of a subject to individuals who has done phenomenal innovative work has been in existence since decades and is often attributed to original innovators or inventors in the respective field. However, one can notice a rise in Pseudo-Fathers globally in their respective field's that actually undermines the contribution of the original Fathers of the subject or the field.

Disclosure – The author is the original Founder of modern and super modern diabetic foot surgery who is known to have given first original principle and practice in diabetic foot as per published literature. With original eponymous publications over decade, the Amit Jain's system of the practice by the author serves as an example of an exception to Stigler's Law, as the original innovations is named after its original innovator.

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