Dear Dr. Beall,

We greatly appreciate your distinguished interest in our journal, and your undoubtedly well-intentioned warning about a dubious paper published in a recent issue.

As an Editor serving the journal for several decades, I have learned that the sins and virtues of authors span a rather colorful palette, and it is far not easy to make justice even in apparently obvious cases.

Plagiarism is a severe accusation which, if confirmed, cannot be relativized or exculpated. Although according to the Wikipedia "the idea [of plagiarism] remains problematic with unclear definitions and unclear rules" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plagiarism), there appears to be an almost complete consensus, that the key criterion of plagiarism is that no credit is given to the source. As you correctly observed in your letter, this is not the case in the ominous paper.

I would say that the authors of the paper used a rather unorthodox technique in the Introduction and the Conclusion sections and the Discussion part of their paper: they compiled a large stock of relevant literature, and edited a coherent flow of text from selected paragraphs (a kind of "collage technique") honestly indicating the sources of each of them separately. The lack of quotation marks may be objectionable, but it is questionable whether their use would have improved the readability or the credibility of the text. I would certainly not encourage other authors to follow this technique, but I cannot condemn it, either.
To be honest, using the customary way of summarizing the literature, i.e., inweaving cited text fragments (whether using quotation marks or not) into a host text, more often than not, the cited ideas are detached from their original context and serve merely as an amplifying aid to the authors' arguments. At least, this kind of bias is avoided using full-paragraph citations.

Between the Introduction and the Discussion, the main part of the paper contains the Methodology and the Results. This part was found by two competent referees original and useful; these opinions supported the decision of the Editor-in-Chief to accept the paper. If you would happen to find any peccability in these crucial parts, this would, of course, justly question the correctness of the decision.

Anyway, we are grateful for calling our attention to the observed anomaly, and we promise to take marked attention to properly handle similar cases in the future.

Let me take the opportunity to ask you whether you would be willing to review manuscripts falling in the scope of your research competence for our journal. As a referee, you would have the opportunity to make your remarks in an early stage, thereby you could help us to improve the quality of our journal.

Sincerely yours,
András Schubert, Editor, Scientometrics