Dialogue 6

Hype, Hedges and Spin: Deception in Scientific Writing

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Noon, Friday, April 29, 1994 Medical Campus, RMSB 3109

—Lunch will be provided—

There is little of ethical interest in frank plagiarism or fabrication—they are just wrong. Grants and articles may, however, founder on less dramatic, but potent, kinds of deception, often unnoticed by the writer. Examples include over- and understatement, emphatic but unsubstantiated claims, downplaying of uncertainty, emphasis of findings over shortcomings, etc. Scientists who assume that such devices go unnoticed by others do so at the risk of their applications, their credibility and scientific inquiry.

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