Dear Sir,

One of the primary aims of any scientific journal such as ORL is the spread of concise reports that are thought to improve our knowledge. The publishing of original papers serves this purpose particularly well. In the interest of the reader, such papers should cover new findings and their implications as completely as possible. Scattering of relevant information in different articles and different journals is a disservice not only to the reader but also to communication in general. That may be the most important reason why most journals have an exclusivity clause when manuscripts are submitted, besides reasons of copyright. ORL states, among other implied conditions, that manuscripts are received with the explicit understanding that they are not under simultaneous consideration by any other publisher.

As an Editor of ORL, I would like to draw your attention to a particularly flagrant case of violation of these general rules. The ‘Original Paper’ by Fujimori et al. [1] deals with possibly interesting material, and I do not want to discuss its scientific content. However, another Original Paper reporting almost certainly the same material appeared at nearly the same time in the No. 4/5 1996 issue of European Archives of Otorhinolaryngology. It was entitled ‘The nasopharyngeal bacterial flora in children with otitis media with effusion’ [2]. The ORL manuscript was submitted on February 10, 1995, the European Archives manuscript on March 30, 1995. Because both articles have been accepted, a clear case of parallel submission is present. The ORL paper covers 37 patients examined from January 1994 to May 1994, the European Archives paper 43 patients examined from January to December 1994. Therefore, the only difference between these two papers lies in 5 additional patients examined in 7 additional months. The wording of the abstracts and many parts of the papers themselves are very similar, sometimes identical. With the exception of the higher number of patients in the European Archives paper, tables 1 and 2 are identical in both journals. Table 3 in ORL corresponds to figure 1 in European Archives of Otorhinolaryngology.

I will be sending a similar letter to the Editor of European Archives of Otorhinolaryngology. It is difficult for all of us to stay informed with the growing number of papers published and with the usual time constraints of busy clinicians. In the interest of a reliable flow of information, and of copyright, I consider it necessary for European Archives and ORL to discourage such publication practices and to take some action against the authors.

References