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## Editorial comment on the letters from Professor de Sa Earp and Professor Strohmaier

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In research, there is often controversy about who was first to develop a particular idea that eventually led to some scientific innovation. In practice, most researchers get their ideas either from reading the literature or from listening to other scientists presenting their work at conferences or from discussions in the bar after the day's proceedings. Since most of us in a given field read approximately the same papers and attend roughly the same conferences, scientists will often arrive at the same conclusion independently around the same point in time. Who is to say that any one of us has a claim to complete originality in our work? In fact, where does a truly original idea actually originate?

The above controversy regarding the development of an in vitro method for training young urologists in endourological procedures appears to be another example of such a situation. Both researchers claim that their particular approach is unique. Having examined the case in detail, I feel that each has contributed something new to that particular field of endeavour but that neither has a sole right to claim *complete* originality. The most likely

scenario is that both researchers developed similar, but apparently not identical, procedures within a year or so of each other. Both were totally unaware of each other's thinking or research work so that there is no question of plagiarism. Both authors first published their work in 2003—Professor de Sa Earp in the *International Brazilian Journal of Urology* and Professor Strohmaier as an Abstract in *Urological Research*. Professor Strohmaier then followed up his Abstract with a full paper in 2005, also published in *Urological Research*.

As to the question of the originality, it would seem to me that each has a claim to a certain degree of inventiveness in their approach to the particular problem of devising a suitable training model for young endourologists but that the techniques described are sufficiently different to accord both authors the right to consider their proposals as “original” material. This being the case, I can see no case for the necessity to re-classify Professor Strohmaier's paper and, therefore, no correction needs to be published in *Urological Research*.

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These comments refer to the letters at <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1007/s00240-005-0009-1> and <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1007/s00240-005-0010-8>

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