

Seeing is no Longer Believing

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Dear Editor

Oral Pathology has always proudly been in forefront to absorb new hi-tech advances for practical use. The widespread and zealous application of digital technology in clinical photography, photomicrography and radiography is an appropriate example. As most of readers are aware, freely available softwares can be used to clean up / manipulate these digital photographs by various tools available. But, there is a fine line between acceptable enhancements and digital fraud.

Any tampering of the original image in part or full for malicious usage constitutes digital fraud. It includes [1]:

- a. Additions,
- b. Deletion or Camouflaging,
- c. Modifications of specific characteristics of image (color/contrast etc.),
- d. Amalgamating multiple images into a single complex and
- e. Mixture of any or all of the above.

In an era of “publish or perish,” it is easy to submit to the lure of digital forgery to fabricate the so called “pixel-byte syndrome” [2]. Retouched digital images can be used for unethical purposes in research. Hence quality control in scientific journals and board-certification procedures have now come to include the additional test(burden) of spotting and filtering digitally tampered records [3]. Tools are available to detect image tampering, which is difficult to assess visually [4].

Reader should keep in mind that “seeing is no longer believing” more so when an image defies all

possible scientific logic. The old adage that “all that glitters is not gold” is as pertinent as ever [3]. All digital images must have metadata and watermarking, to prevent their malicious re-use [4,5]. Computer alertness, especially about imaging software, should be promoted amongst oral pathologists.

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