

EDITORIAL

DIGNITY OF RESEARCH AUTHORSHIP

Publication is the mode by which research is circulated and scientific repute is established which is fundamental for all the ethical practices. Authorship is becoming an increasingly complicated issue as research publications proliferate and its significance for tenancy and funding continues. Individual authorship for research papers was the norm followed until the beginning of the 20th century. However, shared authorship became more and more common since approximately 1920¹.

Important guidelines on authorship together with those from International Committee of Journal Editors emphasize that researchers while conducting research should identify the target audiences. There are also guidelines characterizing authors on the basis of their contribution but again it is up to the authors to decide among themselves as to which individual deserves the title "author"². The researcher planning the research project must be competent in planning, executing and reporting the research and execute appropriate authorship. The fabrication, falsification in the findings or conclusions of the research should be avoided. It should be mandatory for authors to review the relevant ethical guidelines and their implications and familiarize with the target journal authorship guidelines.

The criteria determining the authors' sequence on the byline is a matter of mutual understanding of the authors rather than the editor and thus can vary. BioMed Central also emphasizes upon the integrity of research by placing responsibility on all the authors. Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content. The first author should be a person who has contributed most to the work, including writing the manuscript³. The author, who takes the responsibility of correspondence while the manuscript is in the process of submission, review and publication, is regarded as the corresponding author.

Although the corresponding author is primarily in communication with the journal, ICMJE is of the view of sending copies of all correspondence to all the listed authors⁴. Those, whose participation in the research is not justified as author, are acknowledged individually or as a group. Editors are told to ensure that the corresponding author obtains written permission to be acknowledged from all the acknowledged individuals⁴. Today, reputable journals in every scientific discipline have guidelines for authorship, but the protocols still haven't exactly stabilized and rarely address author order. The participation of Gift authors is insignificant even though the primary investigator might be of the view that it's a favor to the recipient or that addition of the name of a recognized scientist will increase the chances of getting published. Gift authors, although mentioned in the middle of the list; can be listed anywhere on the list otherwise. One problem is that people who are being unethical about authorship are simply following common practices. While on the other hand Ghost authors are who contribute in the research, data analysis or/and manuscript writing but are not mentioned in the author byline or acknowledgment⁵.

In case a co-author dies or is undermined during the process of publication, it is advised that the co-authors obtain disclosure and copyright documentation from a legal representative of the aforementioned. In case there's is a change or amendment in the author list after the submission of a manuscript, it should be made in writing along with the signature of all authors including those being added or removed. There should also be a justification for the change stated along with the new author list.

The current stress in academic institutes on publication means that faculty needs to publish more research papers as promotions and increments are based on the number of publications. Quantity does not impede quality and when the emphasis is on quality, there is less probability of issues regarding integrity and soundness of the

research. Concerns about scientific integrity and responsibility increase pressure for publications. The most important aspect is to inform researchers about the requirements to become an author and the significance of flawless decisions regarding authorships. More ethical standards for manuscript authorship should be critical for fostering good medical writing practices that is to contribute credit where credit is due.

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