Publication Ethics: Part 2 - Authorship

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Objectives

- Define authorship, including guest and ghost authorship
- Describe who qualifies to be an author
- Define contributorship
- Develop a personal strategy to avoid conflicts in determining authorship

Who is an author?

- Guidelines are found at www.icmje.org under Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts
- Made substantive intellectual contribution to the work
- Takes responsibility for at least one portion of the work
- Able to defend the entire work publicly
- Who is not an author?
  - Funder of the project
  - Someone who collected data, including articles
  - Project supervisor
JAANP Case - Authorship Criteria

- Authors Dr. A (contact and primary author) submitted a review article on behalf of himself and two others (Dr. B and Dr. C).
- Submission was complete and included a cover letter with attestation that all authors agreed with the content of the manuscript, CTA was signed.
- iThenticate® report indicated 88% similarity index excluding bibliography.
- Rejected without review, all authors notified.
- Second and third authors claim they had nothing to do with the writing but agreed to have their names added to the manuscript.
- What are the ethical violations in this case?

ICMJE Criteria for Authorship

(http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html)

- Authorship credit should be based on:
  - 1) substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data;
  - 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and
  - 3) final approval of the version to be published.
- Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.
- If you do not meet these criteria you are not an author.
- If you misrepresent yourself an author this is a form of research misconduct.

Guest or Gift Authors

- An author who is recruited for the sole purpose of enhancing the credibility of a manuscript (e.g., an authority in the field).
- An author who has not contributed to the development of a manuscript but who by virtue of his or her position demands authorship credit in the byline (e.g., a supervisor or department chair).
- Rewards may be financial remuneration of academic advancement.
Perils of Student/Supervisor Relationships (COPE case 10-19)

- Professor X submitted a paper to a journal and included student Y (his doctoral student) as an author.
- Student Y had drawn 2 figures for the paper but this was not the student’s research.
- Paper was returned to Professor X for substantial revisions.
- Revised paper was submitted with a change in authorship.
- Student Y was no longer an author but her contribution of the figures was acknowledged.
- Student Y complained to the editor objecting to reduced status in acknowledgements.
- Does student Y qualify as an author?

ICMJE Criteria for Contributorship
(http://www.icmje.org/ethical_1author.html)

- Contributors are listed in the acknowledgements.
- Potential contributors include: technical help with research such as data input or recruitment of subjects, writing assistance, funding assistance, drawing of figures or artwork.
- In multicenter trials, clinical or participating investigators should be named as contributors with their contributions noted (e.g., cared for study patients in [Clinic name or location]).
- Contributors should give written permission to be acknowledged.

Ghost Authors

- An unidentified writer who makes a substantial contribution to the writing or editing of a manuscript but is not identified as an author.
- Usually a professional writer or a company employee.
- May be a student who writes papers for an academic.
- This is ethically unacceptable and expressly prohibited by publishers.
Order of Authorship

- Establish early in the process
- Base on contribution to the work
- Make a written agreement
- Resist attempts of others to be “guest authors”
- Not the editor’s decision

Delineate Contributions

- Not an exact science
- List the tasks involved in the research and the paper
- Make assignments
- Keep records of discussions
- Reassign tasks if people do not complete as promised
- Include your list of author contributions in cover letter when you submit

Corresponding Author

- Administrative role
  - Does not have to be first author
  - Does not have to be senior author
  - Responsibilities include maintaining communication with the journal and co-authors to facilitate:
    - Revising submission based on reviews
    - Approving page proofs of final article
    - Responding to requests for reprints or comments from readers
Reasons for Changes in Authorship

- Authorship disputes are not popular with editors!
- You may request your name be withdrawn but you must provide a valid reason
- All authors must agree to the change
- If there is a dispute the manuscript will be held without review or publication until the issue is resolved
- It is generally not allowed to withdraw a manuscript submission if an ethical issue is pending until that issue is resolved
- Authors may be added with the same caveats as above

Summary

- Ghost, gift, and guest authorship are unethical practices in publishing
- Authors must be able to defend the entire work and guarantee that it is true
- Corresponding authors must be responsible for the administrative tasks associated with communicating with editors and publishers
- Author disputes must be settled prior to submission to avoid delay in reviewing or publishing