

Authorship Policy

Assignment of authorship documents the contributions individuals have made to a published work. Thus, authorship constitutes a key criterion by which funding agencies, academic institutions, and the wider academic community judge the contributions of academics to their fields. Appropriate assignment of authorship is an essential component of ethical conduct for academics.

Authorship on a publication implies substantial contribution to work being reported, which entails critical intellectual and/or technical contributions without which the publication as it exists would not have been possible. Contributions that merit authorship include a significant role in planning the studies, writing the manuscript, and other essential roles involving unique skills. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) guidelines recommend that each author have responsibility for at least one component of the work, and that all authors approve the final version. Listing the explicit contributions of each author, as many journals currently require, is indeed a valuable and recommended method for disclosing and clarifying the rationale for the inclusion and order of authors. The contributions of colleagues or collaborators whose participation does not warrant authorship should be acknowledged.

The requirement of substantial contribution clearly precludes unethical practices such as honorary authorships for senior colleagues who made minimum contributions to the work, colleagues whose role was solely to obtain funding or similar resources for the work, or contracted individuals who simply carried out routine services for hire. This same principle precludes omitting from authorship colleagues who did make substantial contributions. Ghostwriting, in which an individual takes credit as an author of a manuscript substantially written by an uncredited third party, is never permissible. In summary, authorship credit can be established by the following three criteria: (1) providing substantial contributions to study concept and design, or acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of data critical for the study; (2) drafting the article or revising its content critically; and (3) approving the final version to be published. All authors listed on an article must fulfill criteria (1) and/or (2), and must fulfill criterion (3).

It is expected that inclusion and order of authors will be discussed among all of the authors (including students and postdoctoral fellows). This should occur as early in the scientific process as possible, prior to drafting the manuscript when feasible and certainly prior to submission of the manuscript for initial peer review. Such dialogue is essential for all manuscripts and requires exceptional attention in collaborations involving multiple laboratories or institutions. Whether a contribution is substantial enough to merit authorship may sometimes be a matter of judgment, usually decided by the senior author(s). After authorship and order of authorship have been assigned by the senior author(s), in consultation with, and preferably also in agreement with all authors, the senior author(s) should be able to defend the assignments based on the principles articulated above; final decision on authorship rests with the senior author(s). Members of the scientific team are strongly urged to resolve any disagreements concerning authorship as quickly and amicably as possible, in order to avoid ongoing disputes that could impede or prevent publication of a manuscript. In the event that a disagreement cannot be resolved within the team, the Department Chair should be consulted for guidance.

Additional resources can be consulted:

- ICMJE: Manuscript Preparation and Submission: Sending the Manuscript to the Journal (<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/manuscript-preparation/>)
- ICMJE: Ethical Considerations in the Conduct and Reporting of Research: Authorship and Contributorship (<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html%20>)
- The JAMA authorship criteria (<http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/pages/instructions-for-authors#SecAuthorshipCriteriaandContributions>)

- The Nature policy on authorship (<http://www.nature.com/authors/policies/authorship.html>)

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