

Guidelines on authorship

There are no international rules on who should be an author and who should not. Authorship and co-authorship can become an issue if those involved in the research do not discuss this issue early on in the writing process.

The following is an extract from the journal *Oikos* which provides some guidance.

Papers should conform to recommendations for authorship provided by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (the Vancouver Group; see <http://www.icmje.org>). That is, authorship of a paper carries with it responsibility as well as credit. All those whose names appear as authors should have played a significant role in designing or carrying out the research, writing the manuscript, or providing extensive guidance to the execution of the project. They should be able to present and defend the work in a public forum. Honorary authorship is to be avoided. All authors must be in agreement on both the submission and full content of any article carrying their name. Any violation of these conditions represents academic misconduct and will be dealt with accordingly.

Extracted from International Committee of Medical Journal Editors

Ethical Considerations in the Conduct and Reporting of Research

II.A Authorship and Contributorship

II.A.1. Byline Authors

An “author” is generally considered to be someone who has made substantive intellectual contributions to a published study, and biomedical authorship continues to have important academic, social, and financial implications. (1) In the past, readers were rarely provided with information about contributions to studies from those listed as authors and in acknowledgments. (2) Some journals now request and publish information about the contributions of each person named as having participated in a submitted study, at least for original research. Editors are strongly encouraged to develop and implement a contributorship policy, as well as a policy on identifying who is responsible for the integrity of the work as a whole.

While contributorship and guarantorship policies obviously remove much of the ambiguity surrounding contributions, it leaves unresolved the question of the quantity and quality of contribution that qualify for authorship.

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors has recommended the following criteria for authorship; these criteria are still appropriate for those journals that distinguish authors from other contributors.

- Authorship credit should be based on 1) substantial contributions to conception and design, or 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.

- When a large, multi-center group has conducted the work, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript (3). These individuals should fully meet the criteria for authorship defined above and editors will ask these individuals to complete journal-specific author and conflict of interest disclosure forms. When submitting a group author manuscript, the corresponding author should clearly indicate the preferred citation and should clearly identify all individual authors as well as the group name. Journals will generally list other members of the group in the acknowledgements. The National Library of Medicine indexes the group name and the names of individuals the group has identified as being directly responsible for the manuscript.
- Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship.
- All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed.
- Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for appropriate portions of the content.

Some journals now also request that one or more authors, referred to as “guarantors,” be identified as the persons who take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article, and publish that information.

Increasingly, authorship of multi-center trials is attributed to a group. All members of the group who are named as authors should fully meet the above criteria for authorship.

The order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the co-authors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed.

II.A.2. Contributors Listed in Acknowledgments

All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments section. Examples of those who might be acknowledged include a person who provided purely technical help, writing assistance, or a department chair who provided only general support. Editors should ask authors to disclose whether they had writing assistance and to identify the entity that paid for this assistance. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

Groups of persons who have contributed materially to the paper but whose contributions do not justify authorship may be listed under a heading such as “clinical investigators” or “participating investigators,” and their function or contribution should be described—for example, “served as scientific advisors,” “critically reviewed the study proposal,” “collected data,” or “provided and cared for study patients.”

Because readers may infer their endorsement of the data and conclusions, all persons must give written permission to be acknowledged.