

Editorial

Authorship and contributorship

著作人與貢獻者

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Editor-in-Chief

In the papers submitted to the Hong Kong Journal of Emergency Medicine for publication, the majority of the authors participated in the conception, execution and documentation of their works. However, direct or circumstantial evidence has indicated that a number of "authors" had little or no contribution to the work of production whatsoever (from personal communication or judging from the quality of the data, statistics, presentation or even the written English in the manuscripts). Traditionally, "honorary" authorship has been bestowed to mentors, supervisors or department directors, a practice that is now strongly discouraged. In order to promote the highest ethics in publishing, the following guidelines qualifying authorship are extracted from the "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication (International Committee of Medical Journal Editors: www.icmje.org, updated February 2006): -

[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. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors has recommended the following criteria for authorship: -

- 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-centre group has conducted the work, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript. 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.

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

All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgements 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. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

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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.]

In summary, all persons cited as authors should have participated sufficiently in the work of production.

Allowing one's name to appear as an author without having contributed significantly to the study or adding the name of an individual who has not contributed is ethically unsound. Acquisition of funding, collection of data, contributing cases, general supervision or just being the head of the department, by itself alone, does not justify authorship. As a reminder, some journals require declaration of the role of contribution by individual authors. As reviewers are blinded to the names of the authors, just by adding 'big names' will have little effect on acceptance by our Journal. I hope all "authors" would actively participate in the process of production in order to improve the quality of the submitted articles. The credibility of research depends on the demonstration and maintenance of the highest integrity and ethical standard.