

# Editorial

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It gives us immense pleasure to inform that the first issue of 2016, CODSJOD has been released and it is available at [www.codsjod.com](http://www.codsjod.com), Jaypee Publications. This journal is indexed in Google Scholar at present and stepping towards PUBMED indexing. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the past editors Dr Narayan Valvalkar, Dr Mamtha GP, Dr Sharhidhara HS and Dr Nandini DB who have contributed to the journal making in the initial stage.

## TRAVESTY IN TERMS OF AUTHORSHIP CREDIT

All clinicians and academicians rely on scientific literature to keep up with the advancements in his/her field. Yet we are unaware about the actual authenticity of most research publications. It is all the more perplexing to learn that many a times genuine research and ingenious hard work by a researcher is not rewarded due to disparity in authorship claims.

### Authorship Disparity in fields of Research

Authorship disputes range from false expectations, authors with no participation given credit to unethical ghost-writing. Both undeserved authorship and ghost-writing are widespread. Depending on the discipline and type of publication, studies have revealed inappropriate authorship in “only” 20% of articles, evidence of honorary authorship in 40% and evidence of ghost authorship in 75%<sup>1</sup>.

### Who is an author?

There have been a number of attempts at developing guidelines that deal with the problem of authorship. The most prominent is the Vancouver Protocol, which resulted in the establishment of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) in 1997.

According to these guidelines, 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
3. Final approval of the version to be published.<sup>2</sup>

Despite being cited by International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), these guidelines are often disregarded.

### What should be the order for authorship credit?

Since order of authorship is more of an ethical and moral problem than a legal one, it is often taken for granted.

In an overview published in 2007<sup>3</sup>, four basic approaches are presented which can help to avoid arbitrary or inappropriate determination and interpretation of author sequence. In the first approach, known as “sequence determines credit” (SDC), the sequence of authors reflects the importance of their contributions in descending order. The first author is thus accorded the greatest weight and the last author the least. The second approach involves listing all authors in alphabetical order. This is particularly appropriate in cases where all authors have made similar contributions to the publication. It is therefore known as the “equal contribution” (EC) approach. The third approach highlights the importance of the first and the last author; it is known as the “first-last-author-emphasis” (FLAE) norm. Finally, the “percent-contribution-indicated” (PCI) approach allows each author’s contribution to be expressed in percentage terms, using various scoring systems.

The corresponding author (whose contact address is printed in the publication) often appears as the first or last author. This function may be of purely administrative significance. Sometimes, however, it is also associated with seniority, or the corresponding author bears overall responsibility and represents the team of authors vis à-vis third parties.<sup>4</sup>

Listing of the other authors in the order of importance of their contributions is a widely recognized practice.

It is a violation of scientific integrity to grant authorship to a person who has not made a sufficiently substantial scientific contribution to a publication. This includes colleagues with only marginal involvement listing each other as authors in their publications, or a senior academic not involved in the research. The latter practice is advantageous to both parties since the researcher gains from the senior academic’s reputation while the academic effortlessly gains a publication.

Authors have a scientific responsibility to provide proper research and also have an ethical liability to ensure due credit to its researcher. Hence, authorship order should be restricted solely on basis of contribution in contrast to seniority. The practice of honorary or gratuitous authorship should be refrained from as it discredits the efforts of the main researcher.

## References

1. Scientific I, Hess C, Brückner C, Kaiser T, Mauron A, Wahli W et al. Authorship in scientific publications: analysis and recommendations. *Swiss Medical Weekly*. 2015;.
2. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) [Last accessed on 2014 Aug 04]. Available from: [http://www.icmje.org/urm\\_main.html](http://www.icmje.org/urm_main.html) .
3. Tschamtko T, Hochberg ME, Rand TA, Resh VH, Krauss J. Author Sequence and Credit for Contributions in Multi-authored Publications. *PLOS Biology*. 2007;5:e18:13-14.
4. Guidelines of Eawag, PSI, EMPA and WSL (otherwise similar to the wording of the ETHZ Guidelines).

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