Authorship
in Scholarly Publishing

Not so straightforward after all!

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Publish or "perish"

Wish to advance science/ improve health outcomes

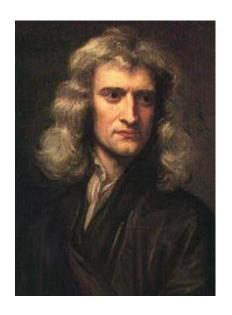Disseminate results of your (hard) work

Enhance your status/track record/reputation

Improve chances for promotion

Improve likelihood for research grants

Moral obligation to publish research

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Isaac Newton
(1643–1727)

"Isaac Newton was famously reluctant to publish, and when he did, *to put his name to the work*."

Drummond Rennie

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Purpose of authorship

- Right persons to *receive credit*
- Assign *responsibility* for the research
- DHET *subsidy claims* (in RSA)

Problems with authorship

- "**Honorary (Gift)**" authorship – not meeting all the criteria

- "**Ghost** authors" – professional writers or true author not listed

- **Qualifying persons simply left out -** student, supervisor, former colleague

- **Order** or authors (student/supervisor)

- **Affiliations** misleading

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Who should be an author?

*someone who has made **substantive intellectual contributions** to a published study*

» ICMJE.org

ICMJE - 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*.

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ICMJE – more guidance…

Author must also be able to:

- *take (public) responsibility for at least one component of the work, and*

- *identify who is responsible for each other component of the work*

Specialisation - Guarantor(s)

- With specialisation individuals may be taking responsibility for appropriate sections of the work, and it may be unreasonable for all to take responsibility for all aspects

- However: **One or more individuals required to take responsibility "as a whole"- the guarantors**

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Large group research

- Group must *identify individuals who accepts direct responsibility* (they must all meet criteria) – "*responsible group*"

- *Group name given* and all individual members must be identified

NLM – list group name & responsible group as authors; rest of collaborators in acknowledgements

Number of authors

- No rules

- Databases (electronic) - list them all

- All that qualify must be listed

Caution: The more authors, the longer it takes to complete the task!

Order of authors

- Joint decision of all co-authors

- There must be an explanation for the order

- Generally a lead author – takes initiative

- Position of student/supervisor (student first)

Tip: decide before the time! If cannot decide, get independent person to arbitrate.

Contributions

- Some journals require a *statement about the contribution of each person* (if more than one), to be **published**.

Affiliations

- Affiliations **important in RSA (DHET subsidy)**.

Tip: *List two affiliations, with first affiliation the one during the time of the study, second the current affiliation.*

Acknowledgements

- Contributions that do not merit authorship
- Name person, and describe contribution (e.g. "John Citizen was responsible for language editing")
- Funding/support received
- Permissions received (publish, use databases)

Note: All persons should be aware of their acknowledgement (signature may be required)

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Appeals to modify authors or affiliations

- Editors reluctant to become involved – no information to make a decision
- Editors will require written approval from all authors to make changes
- Dispute needs to be internally resolved
- Independent arbitrator

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How to avoid authorship disputes

- *Policies* – department, faculty, university
- Institutions to encourage *culture of ethical authorship* – influence local customs and practice (education, example)
- <u>*Discuss authorship*</u> when planning <u>research</u>
- <u>*Decide on authorship*</u> when planning an <u>article</u>

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Use the author guidelines

Metadata (author info, abstract)

Formatting

Length, word count, tables, figures

Style and system of referencing

Correct submission (paper, online)

Uniform requirements (ICMJE) – *www.icmje.org*

COI policies

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Thank you!

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www.openjournals.net