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Editorial

Authorship

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An 'author' is someone who has made substantial contributions to a published study. The authorship determination of scientific papers can be difficult and authorship disputes are common. Sometimes, disputes arise about who should be listed as authors of that particular intellectual work and of course the order in which they should be listed. Disagreements over authorship are usually the result of misunderstanding and failed communication among colleagues. This can be easily avoided by clear and open understanding of standards of authorship. The authors may be benefited from the clear authorship instructions of journals. The authorship criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) are widely accepted in medical and biomedical journals, but many studies in the prestigious journals show that adherence to the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommendations for medical journals is low and a considerable proportion of authors do not fulfil these criteria. Marusić¹ et al analyzed statements on research contribution, as checked by the corresponding author, for individual authors of 114 research articles, representing 475 authors, submitted to the Croatian Medical Journal (CMJ) from 1999 to 2000. Only 40% of authors fulfilled the ICMJE authorship criteria. Wager et al² examined the instructions to contributors from 234 biomedical journals and concluded that majority of the journals do not provide consistent guidance about authorship and many editors miss an important opportunity to educate potential contributors. Wislar³ et al assess the prevalence of honorary and ghost authors in six leading general medical journals in 2008: *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *JAMA*, *Lancet*, *Nature Medicine*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, and *PLoS Medicine*, and compare this with the prevalence reported by authors of articles published in 1996. Evidence of honorary and ghost authorship in 21% published articles suggests that increased efforts by scientific journals, individual authors and academic institutions are essential to promote responsibility,

accountability and transparency in authorship to maintain the integrity in scientific publication. The authorship credit is mainly based on the following three categories:

1. Contributions to conception and design of the study, data acquisition or data analysis and interpretation.
2. Drafting the article or revising it critically for the intellectual content.
3. Final approval of the version to be published.

All three conditions (1, 2 and 3) must be met. Acquisition of funding, the collection of data or general supervision of the research group do not justify authorship. An author must take the responsibility for at least one component of the work and should be able to identify who is responsible for each other component in their co-authors' ability and integrity. Guest, gift and ghost authorship do not fill the criteria of authorship and are unacceptable.

Authorship in medical and biomedical journals, as well as editorial ethical responsibilities towards authorship criteria needs to be critically redefined which can educate both editors and authors.

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