
Authorship

TRANSCRIPT

Research Ethics Online Course

1. Publications are our the currency of academic ability - our academic worth is measured in publications. You need publications in order to have a PhD, if you wish to succeed as a post doc, you will need to produce further articles. Having any chance of getting funding will again require you to have publications in your name. Essentially anything you do in a research career requires ongoing strong publication record. This makes authorship a key to doing anything academically. No wonder people approach authorship with powerful intentions and may wish to do what ever it takes to have their name on a paper.
2. Authorship is also important because authors share responsibility for the paper for its scientific content to be true and for the work and paper to have followed ethical guidelines. It is important to note that all authors share this responsibility, not just the first author. Responsibility creates accountability and an ability to trace results, ideas, credit, and problems if need be.
3. As authorship is important, an effort has been made to come up with some rules about it. But as authorship situations are very diverse, there cannot be one size fits all rule about who is an author and who is not.
4. Authorship rules are often devised by journals and one of the more often referred to ones are the Vancouver guidelines designed by the ICMJE. All of the guidelines and rules out there focus on the same principles of the authors having done something significant, substantial, critical and /or important in relation to the design, data acquisition, analysis and written work in the paper presented. The words significant, substantial, critical and important all invite the question of what constitutes significant, substantial, critical and important in any given situation. Each group, project, journal and person needs to consider this and be aware of how that is defined in each instance. There are links below to existing rules and definitions. These can be helpful for you to know if you face any challenges or questions in relation to authorship.
5. Planning is the best way to avoid authorship questions from becoming problems. Discussions should be had at least at the beginning of any project that might lead into a publication. The plan can consist of plans of what to publish, where and when and most importantly, who are the authors for each intended publication. The authorship

plan, which may have been written or just a verbal agreement, should be revisited and possibly revised if the project changes in any way that may affect authorship issues - this could be changes due to the findings and methodology or when people leave or arrive at the group. Finally at the end, authorship plan needs to be confirmed, whether it still works. It is important that everyone agrees to the author list on the paper. Having a plan increases transparency, reduces anxiety and enhances ethical behaviour in research.

6. Many journals now require a statement of authorship to be submitted with any manuscript. This statement essentially makes it explicit who has done what in relation to the manuscript - the details of every author's contribution is listed. COPE Committee on publication ethics (2014). statement of authorship and you are able to find a link to it below.