

AUTHORSHIP GUIDELINES

These authorship guidelines are adapted from the “Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication” by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (www.icmje.org, See http://www.icmje.org/urm_full.pdf for full guidelines).

Authors

An author is generally considered someone who has made substantive intellectual contributions to a published study. In the past, readers were rarely provided with information about contributions to studies from those listed as authors and in acknowledgments. Some journals now request and publish information about the contributions of each person named as having participated in a study. The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors recommends the following criteria for authorship; these criteria are still appropriate for journals that distinguish authors from other contributors.

- Authorship credit is 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-center group has conducted the work, the group should identify the individuals who accept direct responsibility for the manuscript. These individuals should fully meet the criteria for authorship defined above. When submitting a group author manuscript, the corresponding author should clearly indicate the preferred citation and should clearly identify all individual authors as well as the group name. Journals will generally list other members of the group in the acknowledgements. 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.
- As a practical matter, with multi-authored publications it is usually important to designate or acknowledge one individual as the Lead Author, who takes responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole. This Lead Author often also serves as the corresponding author.
- The Lead Author is responsible for: 1) including as co-authors all those who meet the three criteria defined above; and 2) obtaining from all co-authors their agreement to be designated as such.
- The order of authorship should be a joint decision of the co-authors. If a decision cannot be reached, the Lead Author should have final say.
- Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship unless the individual also fulfills the above three criteria.
- 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.
- Honorary or courtesy authorships are inconsistent with the principles of this policy and, as such, are unacceptable.

Increasingly, authorship of multi-center trials is attributed to a group. All members of the group who are named as authors should fully meet the above criteria for authorship.

The group should jointly make decisions about authors before submitting the manuscript for publication. The Lead Author should be prepared to explain the presence and order of these individuals. It is not the role of editors to make authorship decisions or to arbitrate conflicts related to authorship.

Contributors Listed in Acknowledgments

All contributors who do not meet the criteria for authorship should be listed in an acknowledgments 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. Editors should ask corresponding authors to declare whether or not they had assistance with study design, data collection, data analysis, or manuscript preparation. If such assistance was available, the authors should disclose the identity of the people that provided this assistance and the entity that supported it in the published article. Financial and material support should also be acknowledged.

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.