

Letter to Editor

On the authorship criteria

Editor,

The endless efforts of researchers finally pay off at the joyful moment of receiving the acceptance letter. The published article is valued by the authors, as it can advance science and help humanity. But is that all? Of course there remains another major source of encouragement to authors, which may be the most important part of a research.^[1] Paper publishing rewards its authors with scientific credit and acknowledgment. The main currency in the world of science is authorship. Authorship enables scientists to accumulate citations, which seem to be established as the 'true' measure of successful and important science. It is the key to obtaining grants and winning promotions, and predicting a scientist's success.^[2] Yet, authorship is a dubious indicator. Experienced readers know that decoding an author list in terms of actual contribution to the article is nearly impossible. Students find that they have to contribute much more than do senior researchers to be listed as an author, although they might overlook the expertise and knowledge senior scientists bring to the project with their smaller but usually significant contribution. Initially, students can feel exploited, but they may get used to the system. Eventually, if they choose an academic career, they may (more or less willingly) adopt the behavior themselves.^[2]

The authorship of scientific articles is a sensitive task, and stringent criteria are advocated for determining the authors. It is proper to cite only those who have participated significantly. Other contributors must be merely acknowledged in the article.^[1-4] According to the authorship criteria of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), an author has to participate in *all* of the following three points: (1) Either conception of the research idea OR data collection OR analysis and interpretation of the findings, (2) plus drafting the manuscript OR critically reviewing it, and (3) final evaluation of the manuscript. These criteria indicate that solely conceptualizing the research idea, merely running the experiments and data collection, or performing the statistical analyses alone without contribution to the other parts do not count as authoring, although noteworthy and acknowledgeable. These criteria also indicate that an author does not need to be

involved in the research project from the very beginning, since data analysis can be done instead of data collection or study conception. On the other hand, sometimes, students, asked by their professors or deciding on their own, summarize and/or translate available theses or non-English articles of their educators into English papers. However, these translations/compilations barely meet the "paper drafting" criterion of the ICMJE requirements, let alone the three of them. Unfortunately, these criteria are not well understood or followed,^[1-4] and political/personal relations as well determine the list of authors.^[2]

It can also be implied that as long as one is capable of taking part critically and creatively in quite different research fields and still meet the above criteria, the contributor qualifies as an author. Thus, there is no need to be specialized in a narrow field of study

Bottom line, the international standards should replace authorship misinformation; also perhaps authors' contributions should be elaborated on in their papers.^[2]

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