

MBoC improves recognition of co-first authors

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I like to tell students and postdocs “There is no ‘I’ in research.” Teamwork and collaborations accelerate scientific progress by expanding the effort, ideas, and expertise applied to a research problem. However, an impediment to realizing some of the benefits of working together to solve research problems is the sober reality that securing employment, funding, and honors requires that individuals receive credit for their work. Removing impediments to collaborative research is widely acknowledged as important for promoting progress in research. How then should individual contributions be acknowledged in publications when it is not possible to distinguish among the complementary contributions of collaborators? Increasingly, a solution of choice is to designate two or more individuals as “co-first authors” or “equal contributors.” While



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this practice can be helpful, it is nevertheless a source of frustration that one individual will be listed first on the author list when the paper is cited, and only that person is listed in citations within the text of manuscripts (e.g., Smith *et al.*), giving undue credit to the first listed author.

MBoC is excited to announce the following changes designed to improve recognition of co-first authors for papers published in MBoC or cited in MBoC papers: 1) For MBoC papers that have co-first authors, the co-first authors will be listed together in the footer of the article PDF (e.g., J. Smith, C. J. Jones, *et al.*). 2) For cited papers that have co-first authors, the names of the co-first authors will be printed in **boldface** in the *References* and a statement at the top of the *References* will explain why the names are in boldface. 3) For citations in the body of MBoC papers, all co-first authors will be listed (e.g., Flannagan, Canton *et al.*, 2014).

Implementing recognition of co-first authors for papers cited in an MBoC article will require that our authors identify papers in their reference list that were co-first authored. We are aware of one other journal, *Gastroenterology*, that has introduced a similar practice (Dubnansky, 2012)

We hope that scientists will be more inclined to join forces in research collaborations as a result of these new MBoC practices.

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REFERENCES

Boldface names denote co-first authors.

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