



AUTHORSHIP GUIDANCE

Principles, Communication and Dispute Resolution

INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to provide guidance on authorship and procedures for avoiding and resolving authorship disputes. These guidelines apply to all types of print and electronic publications, *e.g.* full articles, abstracts, technical notes *etc.*, as well as oral and poster presentations.

This document echoes the publication ethics involving sponsorship, authorship, and accountability as detailed in the current “Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals: Writing and Editing for Biomedical Publication” provided by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) are ascribed to by the Medical University of South Carolina.

RECOMMENDED PRINCIPLES OF AUTHORSHIP

It is well recognized that traditions of joint authorship vary among disciplines, as well as among scientific journals and even among laboratories and research teams within the same area of research. This general set of principles serves as guidance for decisions regarding authorship.

Authorship agreements and decisions should be initiated and formulated at the outset of a research project and should be part of a continuing dialogue between all individuals involved with the research project.

Authorship agreements should be reexamined whenever significant changes occur, *e.g.* integration of new data, exclusion of existing data or major changes of interpretations in a manuscript.

Documentation of authorship agreements is strongly encouraged.

Guiding principles:

1. Authorship should be based on the following four criteria (from the 2014 ICMJE guidelines):
 - a. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; AND
 - b. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND
 - c. Final approval of the version to be published; AND
 - d. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.
2. Individuals not meeting these criteria for authorship, but who did make other contributions, should be acknowledged in the final publication. It is strongly advised to obtain permission from individuals acknowledged in the publication, as their inclusion may be perceived as their endorsement of the product. Examples of contributions that would be acknowledged in the work are those who:
 - a. acquired funding, collected data or provided general supervision;

- b. provided other technical help or writing assistance;
 - c. contributed space, reagents or equipment, or performed occasional analyses;
 - d. made provision for caring of study participants or provided patient materials; or
 - e. afforded general support, including scientific advising, critical review of the proposal and/or overall encouragement
3. Honorary or courtesy authorship and ghost writing are not appropriate. Furthermore, authorship extended to a guest, for prestige, or in exchange for gifts is not appropriate.
 4. Each author should take full responsibility for his or her contributions to the product by having participated sufficiently in the work.
 5. When publications involve multiple authors, one individual should be identified as the responsible author. The responsible author is accountable for inclusion of all authors meeting criteria in #1 above and confirming agreement from all co-authors on authorship decisions.
 6. The order of authorship will be a decision of the responsible author with input from the co-authors. It is possible that there may be shared first authorship or shared last authorship to reflect equal first-author or last-author contributions. In such situations, the authors sharing equal credit may be listed alphabetically.
 7. Conflicts of interest should be disclosed in accordance with institutional and journal policy.

COMMUNICATING RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF AUTHORSHIP

The responsibilities and expectations for authorship vary by the role of the individual on the research project. The responsible author should ensure that the communication of guidelines and expectations for authorship among all individuals involved in the research is timely, ongoing and reflective of changes in the research project. Furthermore, responsible authors have the primary responsibility for understanding any intellectual property, confidentiality, conflict of interest and research integrity issues.

Principal investigators should assure that all members of their research team are aware of authorship guidelines and policies when members join the research team and periodically thereafter. Authorship guidelines and policies should be communicated in research orientation sessions and any courses or training related to the responsible conduct of research.

Principal investigators should assure that all members of the research team are aware of what authorship entails, and the contributions expected of individuals for authorship. They should also define what constitutes “significant contribution” to a research study. Research team members (*e.g.* students, postdoctoral fellows) are responsible for communicating their expectations with respect to authorship on work that they are involved with to the responsible author, their mentor and/or the principal investigator of their research team during their involvement with the project and prior to any transition from the research team.

Methods of communication range from verbal to formal contract. While informal communications have benefit, more formal communication, in the form of lab meetings and written documentation is encouraged.

AUTHORSHIP DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Authorship disputes are not considered research misconduct as defined by the Office of Research Integrity (Department of Health and Human Services) (http://ori.hhs.gov/misconduct/definition_misconduct.shtml, <http://ori.dhhs.gov/policies/plagiarism.shtml>). Research misconduct issues are addressed through the MUSC Research Integrity Officer (<http://academicdepartments.musc.edu/research/ori/>).

1. Disputes are best avoided by communication from the inception of a research project through publication and/or presentation of the study.
2. Disputes over authorship are best resolved among the co-authors with guidance by the responsible author.
3. If disputes cannot be resolved among the co-authors, including the responsible author, then the issue is presented to the Department Chair(s) or Division Director(s) of individuals involved in the dispute.
4. The Dean of the College may then be approached if the issue is not resolved at the Division or Department level.
5. In unusual situations (*e.g.* those involving multiple institutions or those that cannot be resolved at the college level), the issue may be presented to the Associate Provost for Research for mediation and recommendation.
6. If the dispute involves one of the individuals named in #'s 3-5 above, the person seeking resolution of the authorship issue should contact the individual at the next administrative level.

This document will be periodically reviewed through the Office of the Associate Provost for Research. Any significant changes to the guidance document will be presented to the Faculty Senate. Adoption of the ICJME criteria for authorship at MUSC is in accordance with a Faculty Senate resolution in May 2011.

REFERENCES

Primary

- [MUSC Faculty Handbook – 2011 Edition](#) – 10.02 Responsible Conduct of Research, Section III – Responsibilities, Item (4) Authorship
- [Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly work in Medical Journals](#) - International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) Updated December 2014

Additional References

- [MUSC Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research](#)
- [MUSC Graduate Student Handbook, 2014](#)
- [AAMC Compact Between Biomedical Graduate Students and Their Research Advisors Policies on Research Misconduct – 42 CFR Part 93, Public Health Service, June 2005](#)

Educational Resources

- [ORI RCR Resources – Authorship](#)
- [ORI Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research Chapter 9 Authorship and Publication](#)
- National Academy of Engineering - [Responsible Authorship module](#) - National Center for Profession and Research Ethics
- <http://nationalethicsresourcecenter.net/resources/126>