

Unit Policy on Authorship of publications and presentations

It is highly recommended that decisions about authorship be made at an early stage of discussions about proposed papers/presentations (though whether or not someone is an author, and the order, may be decided later once it is clear what actual contributions have been made by whom). Decisions about authorship, the order of authors, and those to be included in the acknowledgements should normally be made by the first or senior author in consultation with the other authors. If no consensus can be reached then the grantholders (in the case of a grant-funded project) or Unit director (in the case of a Unit-funded project) will adjudicate.

Authorship

In general the Unit follows the authorship criteria established by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors <http://www.icmje.org/> The 2006 version states that:

- “Authorship credit should be 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 and editors will ask these individuals to complete journal-specific author and conflict of interest disclosure forms. 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.
- Acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, alone, does not justify authorship.
- 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.

Some journals now also request that one or more authors, referred to as “guarantors,” be identified as the persons who take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article, and publish that information.

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 order of authorship on the byline should be a joint decision of the co-authors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed.

II.A.2. 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 authors to disclose whether they had writing assistance and to identify the entity that paid for this assistance. 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." "

Order of authors

It should be noted that the significance of the order of authorship differs between different disciplines but is rarely spelled out explicitly. In medical or science journals the last named author is usually assumed to be the 'senior' author, i.e. the head of the project or group, while the first named author is the person who led on the writing of the paper and/or actually did the project. In the social sciences it is usually assumed that the order of authorship expresses the relative contributions to the paper or project, i.e. the last named person has done least. How your publication record is viewed may therefore depend on the field.

The order of authorship should therefore be discussed and decided at an early stage so that all authors are aware of the intended order and its significance. This is especially important in a multi-disciplinary group. You might decide on different decision rules for different types of journals. The best way to avoid disputes or uncertainty is to state in the acknowledgements what the contribution of each author has been, and/or the principles behind the order in this case. Examples might include:

All authors contributed equally and their names are listed alphabetically

The two authors have worked closely on this project and all papers emerging from it so have agreed to alternate the order of authorship

X (third author) had the idea for this project, obtained the studentship and was first supervisor, and is guarantor of this paper. Y (the second author) was co-supervisor and has contributed to successive drafts of the paper. A (first author) conducted this research for her PhD and led on drafting this paper; she is the corresponding author.

The order of authorship reflects relative contributions to this paper, those who contributed most being named earlier.

It is usually sensible to name the corresponding author (if the journal has not already made that clear). The guarantor is the person ultimately responsible for the accuracy, ethics etc. of the paper.

Acknowledgements

All those who make a substantial contribution to a paper without fulfilling criteria 1, 2 or 3, as noted in first bullet point on previous page, (including interviewers, survey management staff, data processors, computing staff, statistical advisers, secretaries and colleagues inside or outside the Unit who have critically reviewed a draft or drafts of the paper) should be acknowledged, usually in an 'Acknowledgements' section specifying their contributions. All papers arising from the Unit's work should include the full title of the Unit (MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit) and the fact that the research was funded by the Medical Research Council or the Chief Scientist Office at the Scottish Government Health Directorate. Papers arising from grant-supported projects should acknowledge the funding body (e.g. ESRC, DoH, CRUK) and give the grant number. The wbs for the Unit research programme in which the publication was produced should be given for both core funded and grant funded work (e.g. "This work was funded by the UK Medical Research Council as part of the Social & Spatial Patterning of Health Programme, wbs U.1300.00.006", or "This work was funded by CSO grant number CZH/4/63 at the MRC Social & Public Health Sciences Unit, wbs U.1300.00.006").

Disclaimers

If the paper or presentation presents opinions or policy recommendations the acknowledgement should contain a disclaimer to the effect that 'The views expressed here are (mine, those of the authors etc.) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the (MRC, CSO, CRUK, Wellcome, etc.)'

Responsibility and advance clearance

Principal investigators (i.e. grantholders or project supervisors) are personally responsible for the content of publications arising from the grant (even if not authors). Directors of MRC Units are personally responsible for the content of publications arising from the Unit programme. This means principal investigators or directors can be held responsible for fraud, plagiarism, double publication, breaches of confidentiality, misrepresentation or gross error in papers. Draft papers intended for publication, or abstracts being submitted to conferences, therefore must be shown to, and be cleared by, the (where applicable) grantholder, the programme leader, and the director.

If you are submitting a paper or giving a presentation based entirely on previous work undertaken before joining the Unit you do not have to clear this with the programme leader or Unit Director. However if the paper is likely to be controversial, and your affiliation is given as the Unit, you should show it to your programme leader and the Unit Director.

Presentations

The principles above about authorship, acknowledgements, disclaimers etc. also apply to presentations given at conferences or seminars.

Document Control Summary

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Electronic file reference	
Status e.g. Draft or Published	Published
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