

CP Institute fact Sheet

Research collaboration and authorship of publications

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Research collaboration and authorship of publications

Multi-centre collaborations are becoming increasingly popular, and they allow a greater breadth of experience and expertise to be brought to research. The nature of collaborative research means issues surrounding authorship and data ownership can arise.

Authorship should reflect the relative contributions to all aspects of the research including; the idea, design, conducting the study, analysis of the data and the writing of the publication.

Some possible author contributions include:

- The concept - initiative/ 'the idea'
- Planning meetings
- Securing funding
- Study design- planning the method
- Conducting the study – administering tests, interviewing subjects, data collection
- Analysis of results – coding questionnaires, qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Drafting papers, commenting on drafts, conference preparation

The order of authorship on a paper should reflect the researchers' relative contribution to all aspects of the research. Only people who can take both responsibility and credit for a piece of work should be authors. There is no universally agreed method for determining the relative weighting of researchers' contributions. Contributions such as the initiative, design and planning of the research often receive a higher weighting than other contributions, for example, conducting the study, which is often undertaken by the less senior members of the research team.

Current Guidelines

The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) is a voluntary committee made up of editors of some of the large scientific journals (including the BMJ and The Lancet). In 1997, COPE produced Guidelines on Good Publication Practice (www.publicationethics.org.uk). The guidelines address a number of research issues, including authorship.

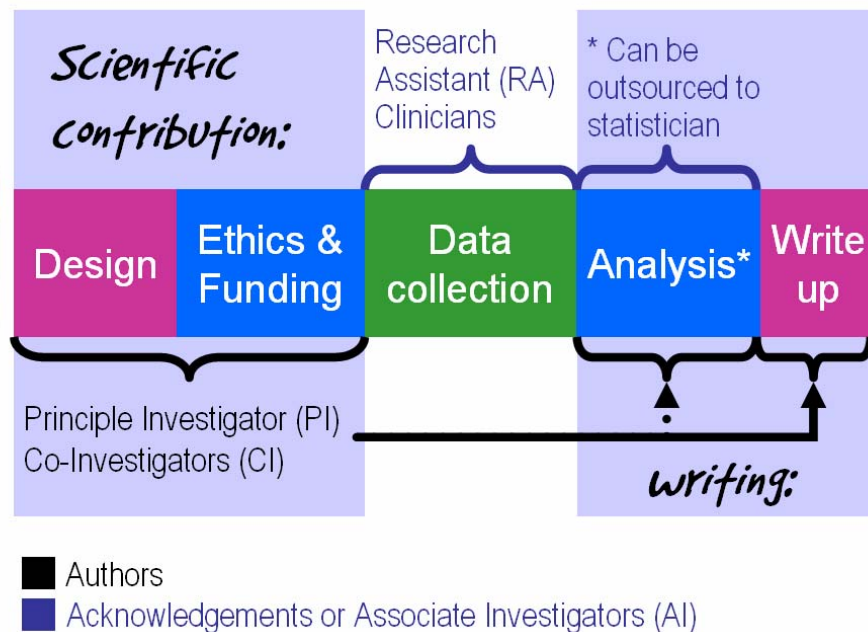
The guidelines advise:

- The award of authorship should balance intellectual contributions to the conception, design, analysis and the writing of the study against the data collection and other routine work. If there is no task that can reasonably be attributed to an individual, then that individual should not be credited with authorship.
- To avoid later disputes, it is helpful to decide early on in the planning of a research project who will be credited as authors, contributors and who will be acknowledged.
- All authors must take public responsibility of their paper.
- It is advisable to read the target journal's "Advice to Authors" in the light of current uncertainties.

Some tips to avoid misunderstandings about authorship:

- Inform newcomers to the research about how authorship decisions are made and how authorship order is determined
- Assess the skills of the collaborators
- Decide who will do what – divide up the tasks and decide which ones constitute authorship.
- If a project changes, renegotiate the agreements.
- If you have problems reaching an agreement amongst collaborators – talk to a third party.

responsibilities & entitlements



Intellectual Property Rights

Intellectual property is based on the concept that the subject matter is a property of the mind or intellect. Intellectual property can be protected by the law in the same way as other types of property.

This issue is relevant to academic research as confidential information (i.e. an idea) is a type of intellectual property right. When conducting research, it is important to acknowledge and credit ideas to the correct person. If an individual's contribution to a piece of research is not acknowledged, it can become a legal matter.

Tips for Clinician researchers

If partnering in a project:

- You can only be an author if you make significant *scientific* project design contributions and *write up* the paper
- Check you are comfortable with the investigator & authorship arrangements before starting the project

If conducting your own project:

- Authorship is not decided around clinical expertise & contribution, rather scientific contribution
- If you seek significant *scientific* project design contributions from others e.g. academics, CP Institute, you must include them as investigators & authors. It adds merit but also prevents intellectual property theft
- Our Research Committee requires you to have a designated supervisor, if you do not have a research degree. It can be an academic colleague or the CP Institute staff
- You must plan to write projects up – it is the only ethically responsible thing to do. Participants, funders and colleagues rely on researchers' commitment to dissemination.

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