1996

Authorship Ethics

Kristen L. Syrett

Lawrence M. Rudner

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/pare

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7275/7c17
Available at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/pare/vol5/iss1/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
Authorship Ethics.

Kristen L Syrett
ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation

Lawrence M. Rudner
ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation

Aside from parts of the "Requirements for Authors" statements that appear in various professional journals, very little has been written about ethical standards for authors in the education field. Topics that have not been addressed include criteria for authorship, acknowledgments, redundant publication, competing manuscripts, and conflict of interest. The education community can benefit from the debates, experiences, and standards developed by the biomedical research community.

Presented here is a summary of key ethical standards outlined in the "Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals," developed by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Adopted by over 500 scientific and biomedical journals, including the New England Journal of Medicine, Science, and Lancet, these ethical standards are effective guidelines for educational publications.

AUTHORSHIP

All persons listed as authors must have made a substantial intellectual contribution to the overall study and accept public responsibility for it. In other words, the author must give input beyond general supervision or instruction of a research group, have a clear understanding of the methodology and implications of the work, and be able to defend the contribution against academic challenge.

Specifically, individuals identified as authors should have made significant contributions:

1. to the conception and design, or analysis and interpretation of data, or both;
2. to drafting of the manuscript or revising it critically for intellectual content; and
3. on final approval of the version of the manuscript to be published.

All three conditions must be met. Participation solely in the acquisition of funding or the collection of data does not merit authorship status.

In cases where more than one person meets the qualifications for authorship of a manuscript, the order of authorship should be a joint decision of the co-authors. The submission should be accompanied by a form stating that the manuscript has been read and approved by each of the co-authors. By signing this form, the authors verify that the manuscript represents honest work. The co-authors share responsibility and accountability for the results. Deceased persons who meet the criteria for inclusion should be listed, with a footnote reporting the date of death. No fictitious name should appear as an author.

Multiple authorship often results in complications. Chances for errors may be greater when the number of persons responsible for a submission is increased. Differences in roles and status compound the difficulties of according credit. Junior scholars may seek to gain automatic acceptance of their work by associating it with the name of an established scholar. This practice leads to an uncritical and inappropriate acceptance by other co-authors, the reviewers, or the readers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Persons who made significant contributions to the work but did not justify authorship may be listed in the Acknowledgment section along with their function or contribution. Authors should be responsible for obtaining written permission from all persons being acknowledged by name. Technical help should be acknowledged in a separate paragraph from those acknowledging intellectual contributions.

Authors have an obligation to use journal space wisely and efficiently. Including extensive and repetitious lists of
acknowledgments is not a good use of journal space and is of little value to the readers of a journal. Unlimited lists undermine the meaning of authorship and the value of an acknowledgment.

REDUNDANT PUBLICATION

Redundant publication is publication of a paper that overlaps substantially with one already published. Manuscripts submitted to a journal are considered for review usually under the conditions that a) the paper is not being reviewed elsewhere and b) the paper has not been previously published. It is generally permissible for an author to submit a manuscript that has been presented at a conference or made available through a document reproduction service, such as ERIC.

Authors should make a full statement to the editor of the journal at the time of submission about all submissions and prior reports that might be regarded as redundant publication. The editor should also be made aware of any subjects that may be mentioned in the manuscript about whom a previous report has been published. The preliminary communication should be cited in the manuscript.

COMPETING MANUSCRIPTS

Editors of a journal may receive manuscripts from different authors offering competing interpretations of the same study. Publication of competing manuscripts to air disputes of authors may waste journal space and confuse the reader. Publication of a manuscript from some, but not all, of the members of a research team may deny the rest of the team legitimate coauthorship rights. Multiple submissions are usually made by co-workers who either disagree on the analysis and interpretation of their study and submissions or on what the facts are and which data should be reported.

Journals do not normally wish to publish separate articles by contending members of a research team. Co-workers should consider submitting one manuscript containing multiple interpretations, then addressing the dispute to the editor so that reviewers may focus on the problem. In cases where co-workers differ in their opinions about observations and data, authors should expect consideration of publication to be declined until the conflict is settled.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Conflict of interest for a given manuscript exists when a participant in the peer review and publication process has ties to activities that could inappropriately influence judgment. These activities may include academic competition or personal relationships, although financial relationships of industry are considered the most important. Public trust in the peer review process and the credibility of published articles depend in part on how these conflicts of interest are handled. Some journals do not accept submissions from authors with a conflict of interest.

Financial relationships and their effects are less easily-detected than other conflicts of interest. The authors should disclose to the editors any commercial associations, contractual relations, or proprietary considerations that might pose a conflict of interest in connection with the submitted manuscript. All sources of funding for the work, personal connections, and institutional affiliations of the authors should be acknowledged in a footnote on the title page.

CITATION OF SOURCES

An author should cite those publications that have been influential to the work. An author has an obligation to perform a literature search to find, and then cite, the original publications that describe closely related work. Unless a footnote or the text of the paper explicitly assigns responsibility for different parts of the paper to different authors, the authors whose names appear on a paper must share responsibility for all of it. Omitted citation can be interpreted as plagiarism. Inaccurate documentation can lead to complications in future research.

An author should identify the source of all information quoted or offered, except that which is common knowledge. Information that has been obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, should not be used or reported in the author's work without explicit permission granted. Sensitive personal information about identifiable persons and information obtained in the course of confidential services should be treated similarly.

FURTHER READING


DOI: https://doi.org/10.7275/rfha-7c17


**Descriptors:** *Authors; Conflict of Interest; Educational Research; Ethics; Research Methodology; Scholarly Journals; Standards; Writing for Publication*