

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) – Authorship & Publication

Within the research community, authorship is the most visible form of academic recognition and credit. In an era of increasing emphasis on commercialization, authorship and credit help to define intellectual property rights. This may explain scientists' desire for the credit of authorship and also make it clear why the assignment of authorship is central to the responsible conduct of research.

Case Study

After working on the research protocol for approximately 2 years, the research protocol came to an end. All data analysis was completed and Dr Pink suggested to Dr Blue that they should publicise their research.

Prior to the start of their publication, both doctors were discussing who should be the primary author to assume the responsibility for all aspects of a publication. After numerous rounds of discussions, Dr Pink and Dr Blue mutually agreed that Dr Pink would be the primary author.

Question 1: What responsibility would the primary author assume?

- The primary author assumes all aspects of publication including the accuracy of the data; the names listed as authors (all deserve authorship and no one has been neglected), approval of the final draft by all authors, and handling all correspondences and responding to inquiries.
- The primary author assumes the role to ensure that the manuscript gets submitted on time to the Journal editor.
- The primary author assumes the role of first author naturally without discussion and agreement with co-authors.



"Dear Mr Trent: Since you only *pretended* to write this paper, I only *pretended* to grade it!"

Question 2: Since Dr Pink is the primary author, does this mean that he is automatically the first author?

- a) Yes, Dr Pink is automatically the first author according to the journal submission criteria.
- b) No. There are no clear rules for determining who should be listed as the first author or the order in which other authors should be listed. However, the order of authorship on the publication should be a joint decision of the co-authors. Authors should be prepared to explain the order in which authors are listed. (*Authorship should be limited to persons who contribute to the conception and design of the work or to data collection and interpretation and, in addition, play an important role in drafting and approving the final publication. Anyone who plays a lesser role can be listed under acknowledgment but not at the beginning of the paper as an author.*)

References

- Shamoo, A.E. and Resnik, D.B (2009). *Responsible Conduct of Research 2nd Edition*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 6: Authorship and Chapter 7: Publication and Peer Review.
- Nicholas H. Steneck, Revised Edition 2007. *ORI Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research Chapter 9: Authorship and Publication*.

Useful links

- To find out more about the RCR components, please visit: <https://www.research.nhg.com.sg/wps/wcm/connect/romp/nhgromp/hsp/responsibleconductofresearch/corecomponentsofrcr>
- To find out more on manuscript submission to Singapore Medical Association, Singapore Medical Journal, please visit: <https://www.sma.org.sg/publications/index.aspx?ID=23>
- To find out more on the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE), Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals, please visit: <http://www.icmje.org/journals-following-the-icmje-recommendations/>

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Correct Answers for Case Studies

1, a, 2, b