

Importance of the authorship order and number of co authors in a Publication for Evaluation: A Necessary Enquiry

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Abstract

There is an increasing trend of multi author research papers in the medical and science journals. Multidisciplinary scientific collaboration indeed must be encouraged, but we need to avoid misinterpretations so that current and future scientific communities can evaluate author contributions. First author should know who should be eligible for the authorship.

Keywords: Ethics; Medical Research; Authorship

Background

There is an increasing trend of multi author research papers

in the medical and science journals^{1,2}. Multidisciplinary scientific collaboration indeed must be encouraged, but we need to avoid misinterpretations so that current and future scientific communities can evaluate author contributions. First author should know who should be eligible for the authorship³.

A relevant research cannot be done without a good team which include the different specialists if required and an expert statistician. Now a day's most of the researchers have more than 100 research publications. It is because of the importance of scientific publications for getting research grants, awards and finally a good job in a reputed institution. 20th Century onwards this importance of research publications resulted in a wide spreading research miss-conducts like plagiarism, poor quality research, and adding several authors who didn't contribute to the research paper. Few authors simply add name of other author for getting authorship in their forthcoming papers. Some authors think if it is multi country author paper then it will be better. This miss conduct should be stopped.

Researcher should know the draw backs of adding several authors. It will reduce their score for the evaluation. Suppose for a good research paper published in a high impact factor journal will be given 10 points by the evaluator then 100 % score will be there if only one author.

If there are two authors then 80% score only considered (8 out of 10) for the first author. Likewise according to the number of authors score will reduce. Finally 6 or more authors are there then only 50% score will be considered for the first author that will be less than the other applicant for the grant, award and job who published single author article in a national level no impact factor journal. Some of the evaluators used to tell the researcher to keep the best 3 to 10 publications for the evaluation purpose according to the agencies. In this case some researchers will be thinking evaluator is biased and given the award to another researcher who has few publications. Keep it in mind there are several universities and agencies who consider only the first author articles for promotions and research grants.

We are strongly recommending the authors of the manuscripts which will be submitted to Nepal Journal of Epidemiology, to read the relevant articles published on the authorship criteria and keep the authors according to that before submitting the manuscript to the journal⁴⁻⁷. We are ready to publish a relevant manuscript with more than 100 authors, but the corresponding author should clarify the contribution of each author in the authors' contribution section of manuscript. Hundley and her colleagues have highlighted the specific responsibilities associated with the role of lead author which are outlined in the below box⁸.

Key tasks of lead author

- Obtaining the journal guidelines and ensuring the requirements are met;
- Producing the first draft of the manuscript;
- Coordinating the feedback from co-authors;
- Ensuring all authors are in agreement before the final version is submitted;
- Coordinating the signing of the copyright agreement;
- Acting as the corresponding author, the person who corresponds with the journal's editor(s);
- Responding to reviewer comments (if invited);
- Reviewing the proofs.

Source: Hundley et al 2013

People who didn't contribute significantly can be acknowledged rather than keeping as an author. Quality of the research papers is more important than quantity. The Nepal Journal of Epidemiology states that authorship credit should be based only on substantial contribution to conception and design, or analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content and final approval of the version to be published.

Conflict of interest:

None

Importance of the authorship order

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