

**Gender Equity Project**  
**Workshop Series for Junior Faculty**  
*Negotiating Authorship Credit*

**A Few Words on Authorship Credit**

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***Authorship Issues***

*“Anyone who allows his or her name to appear among the authors of a paper assumes major responsibilities... Coauthorship should denote at least that there has been meaningful participation in the planning, design, and interpretation of the experiments and in the writing of the paper.”*

Arnold S. Relman [cit. in ref. 4]

Scholarly publications are the primary means for disseminating information and advancing research. However, while we may like to think that our motives for engaging in research are solely altruistic, it is also the case that one’s publication “profile” is heavily scrutinized in promotion and tenure decisions, salary decisions, and employment decisions [2]. Because it is often the primary determinant of academic advancement, the issue of authorship in collaborative scholarship is of great concern to all researchers. The pressure to publish amongst academicians, in conjunction with a rising trend in multi-author papers, has resulted in a disturbing increase of unethical authorship practices [3]. The following are the ethical guidelines for publication credit set forth by the American Psychological Association [1], which are applicable to all disciplines:

- (1) “[Scholars] take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have contributed.”
- (2) “Principle authorship and other publication credits accurately reflect the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their relative status. Mere possession of an institutional position, such as Department Chair, does not justify authorship credit. Minor contributions to the research or to the writing for publications are appropriately acknowledged, such as in footnotes or in an introductory statement.”
- (3) “A student is usually listed as principal author on any multiple-authored article that is substantially based on the student’s dissertation or thesis.”

Though useful, these guidelines fail to outline specific criteria that can be used by researchers to evaluate the extent to which individuals are deserved of authorship. In response to the rise of unethical authorship practices, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) [5] developed three criteria for authorship, appropriate for all journals that distinguish authors from other contributors. They recommend that authorship credit be based on:

- (1) “Substantial contribution to the conception and design of a study; or acquisition of data; or analysis and interpretation of data.”

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- (2) “Drafting the study manuscript or critically revising it for important intellectual content.”
- (3) “Giving final approval of the version to be published.”

It is important to note that meeting one or two of the previously mentioned criteria is necessary but not sufficient for authorship according to ICMJE. All authors must meet all three of the criteria in order to qualify; acquisition of funding, collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, in and of itself, does not justify authorship. Additionally, ICMJE states that, “all persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed” [5].

**References**

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