

GUIDELINES ON AUTHORSHIP OF ABSTRACTS, PRESENTATIONS AND PAPERS



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OBJECTIVES

- To provide a clear understanding of what constitutes 'authorship' and the order in which authors should be recorded.
- To ensure that those staff, students and research collaborators who participate in research activities with *CanChild* are acknowledged and their contributions are fairly and appropriately represented.
- To develop a guideline which is *CanChild*-wide and which is flexible enough to accommodate variations inherent in publication patterns across different research projects, meeting presentations and across different journals.

WHAT CONSTITUTES AUTHORSHIP

- Authorship is usually attributed to persons responsible for the intellectual content of a published work. In the context of articles arising from a research study authorship requires ongoing (rather than occasional) contributions to the study AND actual writing/critical review of the paper. It should be noted that authorship of a research output is a matter that should be discussed at the earliest stages of a research output and re-assessed at any time that there is a change in participation or roles.
- **Definition:** "Authorship is reserved for persons who receive primary credit and hold primary responsibility for a published work" (APA Publication Manual, 2001). At *CanChild* we believe it encompasses not only those who do the actual writing but also those who have made substantial scientific contributions to a study that lead to the presentation or publication.
- Recognizing that research groups at *CanChild* meet regularly and generally provide intellectual/methodological input ongoing, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE, 1997) guidelines have been modified for our purposes as follows:

Authorship credit should be based on meeting **all four** of the following conditions:

- 1) Substantial contribution to the study

- i. Conception and design, (eg. Co-investigator, consultant or research support staff who have intellectually contributed to the grant proposal) **OR**
 - ii. Clinical or methodological support throughout the implementation of the study (generally through participation in regular team meetings) **OR**
 - iii. Analysis and interpretation of data
- AND**

- 2) Provide important intellectual contribution towards the conceptualisation or writing and reviewing multiple drafts of the article or abstract in a timely fashion. **AND**
- 3) Final approval of the version to be published (or may waive final approval at a point where no more substantial changes are to be made). **AND**
- 4) Are prepared to take public responsibility for the paper.

Persons who have not contributed in all of the above ways should not be included in the authorship list. No person should be either included or excluded from authorship without negotiation and the agreement of all parties concerned.

- All co-authors should acknowledge their contributions in writing. This acknowledgment should be placed on a file to be managed by the lead author for the specific publication or presentation.
- Acknowledgment of other contributions of a less substantial nature may be determined by negotiation between authors. These contributions usually include supportive functions such as designing and maintaining apparatus, statistical advice, data collection, administrative support and data entry. The usual practice is for these contributions to be cited as acknowledgments or in a footnote.
- For contributors who are recognised as paid consultants to the research output, their inclusion as authors is usually left to the discretion of the research team. According to common practice however, consultants who contribute substantially to the intellectual content of the publication are normally included as authors. Those consultants who contribute in a less substantial manner or whose contribution does not add to the intellectual content of the publication (eg: standard statistical analysis) are not normally included as authors, but are acknowledged in the work. Under no circumstances should these contributors be excluded from acknowledgment unless they specifically desire exclusion. Some journals require and people should consider asking people prior to acknowledging them in a publication.

ORDER OF AUTHORSHIP

- The principal investigator of the study is responsible for keeping track of all contributors (and potential authors). The PI should make a reasonable attempt to ensure that anyone who may feel that they deserve authorship be made aware of planned papers, presentations in order to

negotiate a possible authorship role. It is up to team members who leave the group for whatever reason to negotiate with the PI (on behalf of the study team) any future roles within the project and keep the team updated of their interest and how to contact them.

- The principal investigator of a study is responsible for initiating a discussion / strategy for determining authorship order for the primary paper and proposed papers emanating from research projects prior to the writing process. This should be done early on in the study to ensure all participants are clear about what is required to be an author and what strategy will be used for deciding authorship order.
- The first author of an individual paper is responsible for initiating the discussion of authorship order for that paper. All authors should be involved in the decision making process, but the final order is ultimately the responsibility of the first author.
- Possible strategies include:
 - 1) The order of authorship could be determined by the intellectual input from each of the authors. The researcher who makes the largest contribution, in terms of intellectual content, is listed as the primary author. Subsequent authors are listed in order of decreasing contribution.
 - 2) Authors, by general agreement, may wish their names to be listed in alphabetical, reverse alphabetical or random order. This is acceptable as long as each member of the party gives consent. The method is then made explicit in the publication (eg. by stating, “All authors contributed equally and are presented in alphabetical order”).
 - 3) The name of the group may be provided as author.¹
 - 4) A formal weighting strategy may be used to rank authors based on specific contributions.²
- In accordance with the 'spirit' and flexibility of *CanChild*, there is recognition that there may be many variations in the strategies used to establish order of authorship within various projects (see the Authorship guidelines binder for ideas/suggestions). The method chosen is determined only by the condition that all authors must be involved in any negotiating process.
- An appropriate time frame to complete the paper should be negotiated with the co-authors for

¹ As research teams get larger this may be the best solution however concern has been raised about its acceptability for tenure and promotion of faculty. This issue was raised with the chair of the tenure and promotion committee, McMaster University, Faculty of Health Sciences (Stephanie Atkinson, personal communication May 16, 2002) who indicated the “Group Name” is quite acceptable as long as it is followed by an annotation of your role on your C.V. Another concern with the use of a “Group Name” was the ability to search the literature effectively. S. Atkinson suggested listing “Group Name” followed by all authors in random or alphabetical order.

² There are a variety of formal strategies of weighting the contributions of co-authors (Digiusto, 1993) (Goldsmith, Cardiel & Clark, 2002) and can be found in the “Authorship Resource Binder” in the *CanChild* library.

people who wish to take on the role of first author. If the person has not made reasonable attempts to meet this target they may lose the opportunity for first authorship and the authorship order may be re-negotiated.

- If someone feels they want to appeal the authorship decisions made by the first author they should indicate to the first author their intention and work with the first author to find a person who is mutually agreeable to both parties and who can objectively re-evaluate the decision.
- It is the responsibility of the first author to let the others know in writing when something has been accepted along with the complete reference for co-author's curriculum vitae.

STUDENTS AS AUTHORS

- Early in the collaboration between faculty and students, the supervisor should provide the student with information related to how authorship decisions are made.
- Faculty and student should participate in discussion and make a reasonable agreement based on the specific abilities of each party on what tasks, contributions, and responsibilities, and extent of supervision necessary to complete the scholarly publication or presentation.
- Under the guidance of their supervisor, students who participate in a research project are required to negotiate their role with the entire research team early on in their involvement including expectations of team members and expectations for authorship. Written documentation of agreement should be kept as reference.
- The agreement between faculty and student needs to be as clear as possible and outlines the tasks, contributions and efforts required to warrant authorship by each party (may include a written agreement).
- Students will normally be primary authors on research publications that arise from their **masters or doctoral thesis work** provided they meet journal requirements and the *CanChild guidelines*.
- Students who undertake a **research internship as part of a professional degree** will normally not be first authors on publications arising from this work except when they meet all the criteria for first authorship. They should be recognized as co-authors provided they meet the journal requirements **and** the *CanChild guidelines*.
- Supervisors may only be included as a co-author on a research student's publication if they meet the above mentioned authorship criteria.

(Note: an excellent discussion of potential ethical issues when dealing with student-faculty collaboration is found in Fine & Kurdek (1993))

AUTHORSHIP ETIQUETTE

- It is the responsibility of the first author to be clear when sending a paper for review by colleagues what the expectations are for the reviewer. Is the paper being sent for the reviewer to provide feedback (conceptual and/or editing) with the expectation that the

reviewer will be an author or is it for information only?

- In light of the authorship criterion that all authors need to have provided feedback on the manuscript it is necessary to discuss and agree upon a time frame for feedback on the manuscript with all parties involved. Generally two weeks should be reasonable, however, this could vary with specific circumstances.
- Anyone who cannot meet the decided upon time frame must correspond with the primary author and negotiate their role.
- Abstract submissions, book chapters, presentations etc. should have similar agreements.

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Developed by Dianne Russell & Melissa Bourbonniere. July 22, 2003 *CanChild* Centre for Childhood Disability Research If you have comments or suggestions please forward them to Dianne Russell (russelld@mcmaster.ca) or (905) 525-9140 x27853. We have also developed authorship scenarios which we used for eliciting authorship discussions at *CanChild*. A journal article describing the development of these guidelines is currently submitted for publication.

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