

INTRODUCTION

Authorship is a way of assigning responsibility for the finished product, and giving credit for intellectual contributions to a publication is an important part of academia. Authorship practices should honestly reflect actual contributions to the final product. Authorship is important to the reputation, academic promotion, and grant support of the individuals involved, as well as the reputation of the laboratory and the institution.

Many institutions, including medical schools and peer-reviewed journals, have established standards for authorship. These standards are similar on basic issues but are changing over time, mainly to take into account the growing proportion of research done by teams with members in highly specialized roles.

Disputes sometimes arise about who should be listed as authors of an intellectual product and the order in which they should be listed. When disagreements over authorship arise, they can take a substantial toll on the good will, effectiveness, and reputation of the individuals involved and their academic community. Many such disagreements result from misunderstanding and failed communication among colleagues and might have been prevented by a clear, early understanding of standards for authorship that are shared by the academic community as a whole. Best practice is for individuals to agree early on as to who the primary author of a publication will be, and for that individual to be the responsible for establishing the authorship order in a clear and transparent manner. The following are the guidelines for authorship in the Christie Laboratory to help with this process. As the lead Principal Investigator, and the individual ultimately responsible for submitting and paying for publications, Dr. Christie will have the final decision in any case where there is an authorship dispute using the guidelines below.

AUTHORSHIP Guidelines

1. The authors should decide the order of authorship together. The earlier this is done in the process, the less the chance there is for confusion. Co-first authorship is an option when individuals contribute equally to the creation of an idea and equally to the laboratory work required for the publication. Authorship guidelines for specific journals must be adhered to and in many cases can help to clarify authorship order and inclusion.
2. Everyone who is listed as an author should have made a substantial, direct, intellectual contribution to the work. For example they should have contributed to the conception, design, analysis, interpretation, or presentation of the data being used in the publication. A general rule of thumb is that an individual should aim to contribute approximately 10% of the total work.
3. Everyone who has made other substantial contributions (<10%) should be acknowledged in the acknowledgments section of a publication.
4. All authors should participate in writing the manuscript by reviewing drafts and approving the final version. Authors should strive to turn around comments within 48 hours of receiving a version of the manuscript.
5. One author should take primary responsibility for the work as a whole even if he or she does not have an in-depth understanding of every part of the work. It is the expectation that trainees will complete a version of a manuscript to hand-in prior to, or at the same time, as they submit their thesis for approval. Having a peer review publication provides strong support of the quality of any thesis.
6. This primary author should assure that all authors meet basic standards for authorship and should prepare a concise, written description of their contributions to the work, which has been approved by all authors. This record should remain with the Dr. Christie. Trainees should acknowledge assistance they received from others at the start of each chapter in their thesis so it is clear and transparent as to how the work was performed.
7. In the case of any disputes, Dr. Christie will determine the final authorship order based upon the information available to him. These policies will be reviewed periodically with laboratory trainees to ensure they are effective and reflect any changes in journal authorship practices.