

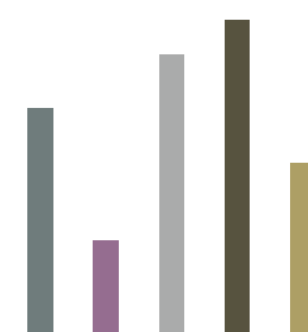


# **Authors, authors everywhere: understanding responsibilities and managing expectations**

**Zoë Mullan**

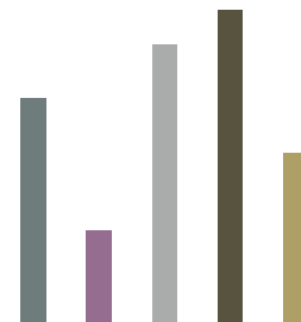
Trustee & Member of Council, COPE

Editor, *The Lancet Global Health*



# Structure

- Why talk about authorship?
- What is authorship?
- Common problems and how to avoid them
- What is the editor's role?



# Why talk about authorship?

**Submit a case**

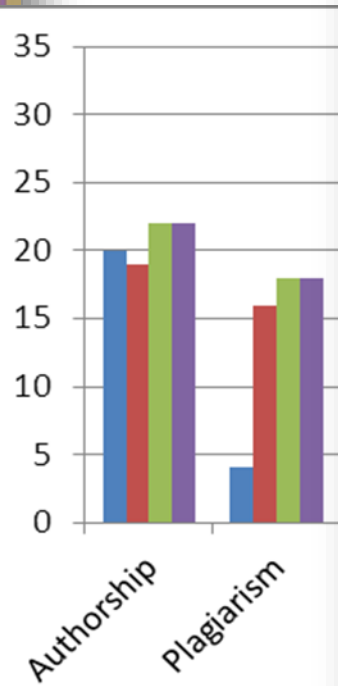
Case name (optional)

Any year

**Search**

**Search by classification**

- Questionable/unethical research (169)
- Redundant/duplicate publication (116)
- Data (108)
- Misconduct/questionable behaviour (105)
- Authorship (103)**
- Correction of the literature (87)
- Conflict of interest (63)
- Plagiarism (58)



## Retraction Watch

Tracking retractions as a

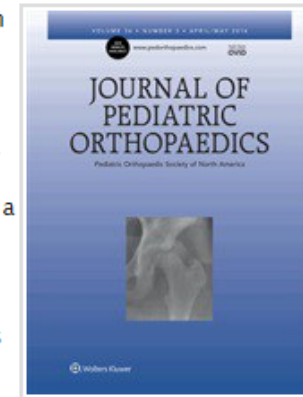
### Author dispute retracts paper suggesting NSAIDs curb growth in rats

without comments

The corresponding author asked the *Journal of Pediatric Orthopaedics* to retract an article that found popular pain medicines can curb growth in rats, in light of an unresolved authorship dispute.

The article, "[Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs Cause Inhibition of the Growth Plate in Cultured Rat Metatarsal Bones](#)," details preliminary results that indicate nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may reduce growth in rat bones in a dose-dependent manner, suggesting caution in treating chronic inflammatory diseases in children. The editor told us the paper was "highly rated" by reviewers and the results were "never in question," but the senior author asked to pull the paper after failing to resolve a dispute with a researcher who asked to be added as an author.

According [to the notice](#):

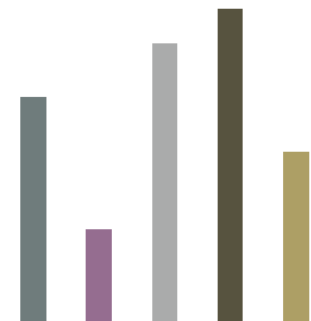


- 1997-00
- 2001-04
- 2005-08
- 2009-12

Questionable/unethical  
Redundant/duplicate  
Correction of  
Correction of  
Misconduct/questionable

# Why talk about authorship?

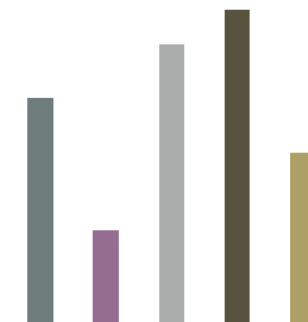
- Authorship conveys significant privileges and legal rights (also responsibilities)
- In the scholarly arena, it also forms the basis for rewards and career advancement



# Why talk about authorship?

Journal type	Monetary reward in China (converted to US\$)
Impact factor (IF) < 1	\$306
$1 \geq \text{IF} < 3$	\$458
$3 \geq \text{IF} < 5$	\$611
$5 \geq \text{IF} < 10$	\$764
$\text{IF} \geq 10$	\$2139
Published in <i>Science</i> or <i>Nature</i>	\$30,562

Source: Shao J, Shen H. *Learned Publishing* 2011; **24**: 95–97. doi:10.1087/20110203



# What is authorship?



## What constitutes authorship? COPE Discussion Document

*COPE Council  
9 June 2014*

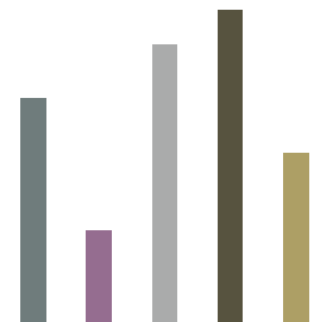
This document aims to stimulate discussion around the most common authorship issues faced by COPE members. It discusses existing guidelines on authorship, puts together some basic principles to help prevent common problems, and sets out some of the more thorny issues that have come to light in previous discussions, many of which are discipline-specific and which require more nuanced consideration. COPE welcomes feedback on this document and invites members to point out further authorship guidelines from across disciplines. We encourage journal editors and publishers to comment (whether or not they are COPE members), and also welcome comments from researchers/authors and academic institutions. Please email all comments to Natalie Ridgeway, COPE Operations Manager at <http://publicationethics.org/contact-us>

### Background

The term authorship can refer to the creator or originator of an idea (eg, the author of the theory of relativity) or the individual or individuals who develop and bring to fruition the product that disseminates intellectual or creative works (eg, the author of a poem or a scholarly article).

# What is authorship?

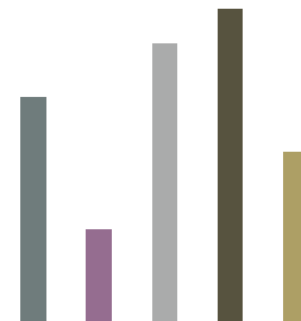
- The creator or originator of an idea (eg, the author of the theory of relativity)
- The individual or individuals who develop *and* bring to fruition the product that disseminates intellectual or creative works (eg, the author of a poem or a scholarly article)



# What is authorship?

## **International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)**

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work; **AND**
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; **AND**
- Final approval of the version to be published; **AND**
- Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

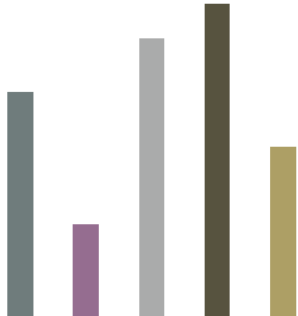




# What is authorship?

## **Council of Science Editors (CSE)**

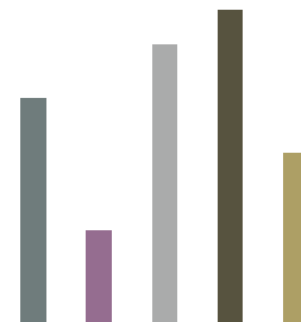
“Authors are individuals identified by the research group to have made **substantial contributions** to the reported work and **agree to be accountable** for these contributions. In addition to being accountable for the parts of the work he or she has done, an author should be able to **identify which of their coauthors** are responsible for specific other parts of the work. In addition, an author should have **confidence in the integrity** of the contributions of their co-authors. **All authors should review and approve the final manuscript.**”



# What is authorship?

## **American Physical Society**

“Authorship should be limited to those who have made a **significant contribution** to the **concept, design, execution or interpretation** of the research study. All those who have made significant contributions should be offered the opportunity to be listed as authors. **Other individuals who have contributed to the study should be acknowledged, but not identified as authors.**”



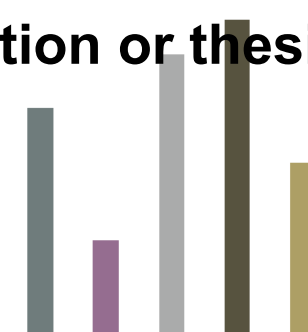
# What is authorship?

## American Sociological Association

“(a) Sociologists take responsibility and credit, including authorship credit, only for work they have actually performed or to which they have contributed.

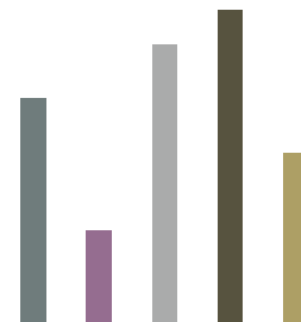
(b) Sociologists ensure that principal authorship and other publication credits are based on the relative scientific or professional contributions of the individuals involved, regardless of their status. In claiming or determining the ordering of authorship, sociologists seek to reflect accurately the contributions of main participants in the research and writing process.

**(c) A student is usually listed as principal author on any multiple-authored publication that substantially derives from the student’s dissertation or thesis.”**



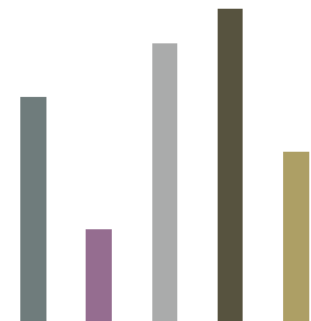
What is authorship?

**It depends who you ask!**



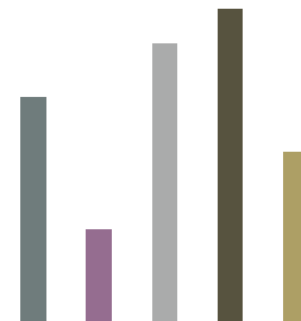
# Common problems...

- Ghosts and guests
- The missing author
- The unwitting author
- The unaccountable author
- The jostling for position authors



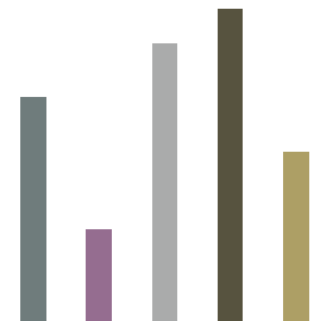
## ...and how to avoid them

- There is no “gold standard” definition
- Adopt a definition and *state it clearly in the information for authors*
- Have a signed authorship declaration *as a condition of publication*:
  - Fulfilment of authorship criteria laid out in journal’s policy
  - No other individuals deserving of authorship have been omitted
  - Seen and agreed to the final submitted version
  - Agree to the order of authorship
  - Responsibility for the integrity of the paper



## ...and how to avoid them

- Judicious use of acknowledgments (with signed agreement)
- Contributorship statement (consider publication of this)
- Send article correspondence to all named authors
- Request signed agreement to authorship changes from all authors



# ...and how to avoid them

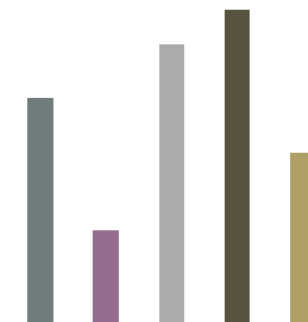
## “Contributors

ST, JZ, and SS came up with the research question and designed the protocol. SS and KD did the literature search, study selection, and data extraction with the help of ST. JZ and DA-M did statistical analysis. SS designed the tables, figures, and appendices, with input from ST. MW provided expert anaesthetic advice. SS and ST prepared the initial drafts of the manuscript, with additional input from KSK, AC, MW, and RN. All authors contributed to the drafts and final version of the manuscript.

## Acknowledgments

This study was funded by Ammalife Charity (Registered UK Charity 1120236) and ELLY Appeal, Bart's Charity (Registered UK Charity 212563). We thank Angela Enright, Clinical Professor of Anaesthesia at the University of British Columbia, for her input into the report.”

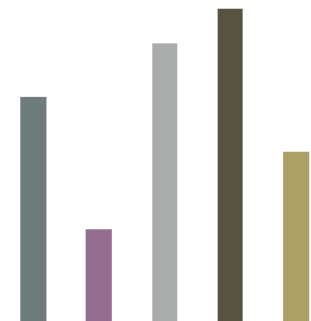
Source: Sobhy S, Zamora J, Dharmarajah K, et al. *Lancet Glob Health* 2016; 4: e320–e27.





# What is the editor's role?

- Editors cannot police author or contributor lists
- Editors cannot judge who or who does not deserve to be an author
- If authors cannot resolve disputes, the institution(s) must intervene
- Papers cannot be published if a dispute is ongoing



# What is the editor's role?



What to do if you suspect ghost, guest or gift authorship  
(see also flowcharts on Changes in authorship, as such requests may indicate the presence of a ghost or gift author)



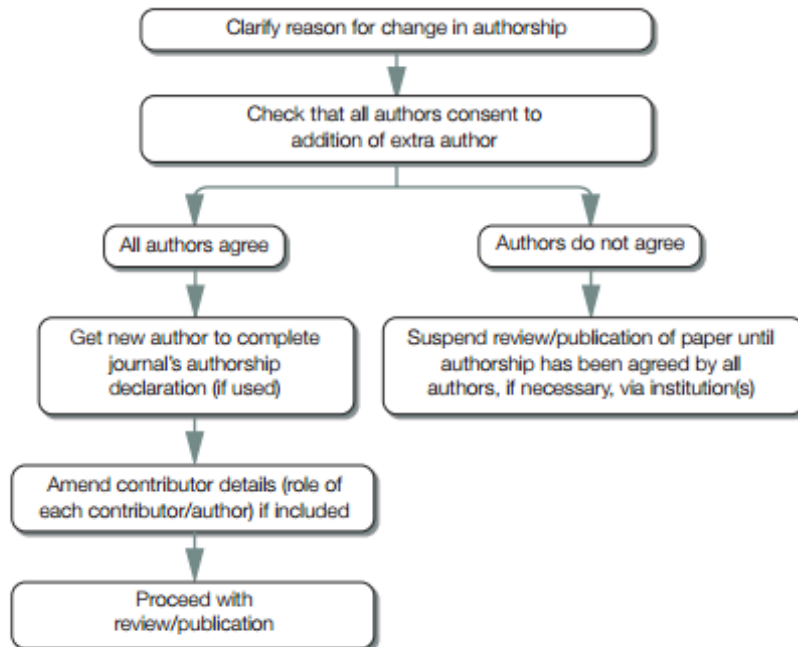
## How to spot authorship problems

Editors cannot police author or contributor listing for every submission but may sometimes have suspicions that an author list is incomplete or includes undeserving (guest or gift) authors. The COPE flowchart on 'What to do if you suspect ghost, guest or gift authorship suggests actions for these situations. The following points are designed to help editors be alert for inappropriate authorship and spot warning signs which may indicate problems.

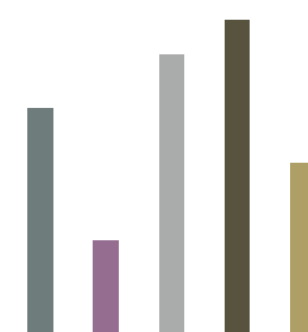
# What is the editor's role?

## Changes in authorship

### (a) Corresponding author requests addition of extra author before publication



Note: Major changes in response to reviewer comments, e.g. adding new data might justify the inclusion of a new author



# In summary

- Editors can do little to *resolve* authorship issues, but can take action to *prevent* many of them
- Have a definition/policy and make potential authors aware of it
- Request written declarations as a condition of publication
- Use COPE resources: [publicationethics.org](http://publicationethics.org)

