### How to Recognise Potential Authorship Problems

#### Authorship Policies:
Clear policies (that allow for transparency around who contributed to the work and in what capacity) should be in place for requirements for authorship and contributorship as well as processes for managing potential disputes.

For further details see: publicationethics.org/authorship

#### Relevant COPE Cases:
- **Stolen Article:** [https://bit.ly/2nKqMhX](https://bit.ly/2nKqMhX)

#### Relevant Flowcharts:

#### References:

### Signs that Might Indicate Authorship Problems

- **Industry-funded study with no authors from sponsor company**
  - This may be legitimate, but may also mean deserving authors have been omitted; reviewing the original protocol may help determine the role of employees

- **Name on author list known to be from unrelated research area**
  - This may indicate guest authorship

- **Unspecified role in acknowledgements**
  - Individual thanked without a specific contribution

- **Unfeasibly long or short author list**
  - eg, a simple case report with a dozen authors or a randomised trial with a single author

- **Language quality in the manuscript does not match that of the cover letter**
  - Bear in mind this may be legitimate if author has used language editing services

- **Corresponding author seems unable to respond to reviewers’ comments**
  - Check Word document properties or tracking or comment functions, but bear in mind that there may be an innocent explanation for this

- **Manuscript was drafted or revised by someone not on the author list or acknowledged**
  - Bear in mind there may be legitimate reasons for this

- **Tracking in manuscript shows that authors have been added or removed**
  - Bear in mind there may be legitimate reasons for this

- **Authorship changes without notification during revision stages**
  - Several similar articles have been published under different author names or aliases
  - This may be detected by an online search or plagiarism check

### Best Practice to Minimise Authorship Problems

1. **Submit**
   - Adopt policies that allow for transparency around who contributed to the submitted work and in what capacity

2. **Encourage**
   - Facilitate awareness of emerging standards eg, ORCID and CRediT

3. **Behaviour**
   - Check for unusual patterns of behaviour which may suggest authorship problems

**Version 1: November 2018**
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