

Co-authorship and Responsibility

Group 4

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Qualifications for authorship

The ICMJE recommends that authorship be based on the following 4 criteria:

- 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.

<http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>

Examples

- The Schön scandal (Jan H. Schön, solid state physicist)
 - Many publications in Nature and Science
 - Repeatedly fabrication of scientific results (at least 16 times)
 - His co-authors were not accused of committing scientific misconduct
- The Korean stem cell scandal (Dr. Woo Suk Hwang, veterinarian)
 - Two publications in Science
 - Both publications contained fabricated data and were retracted
- The Darsee affair (John R. Darsee, clinical investigator in cardiology)
 - Data fabrication
 - 10 primary journal articles and more than 45 abstract were retraced
- The Slutsky affair (Robert A. Slutsky, radiologist)
 - Data fabrication
 - Of his 173 publications, 77 were valid, 48 were questionable and 12 fraudulent
- ...

The Dilemma

- In the case of a fraudulent scientific paper, should all co-authors be held responsible for “scientific misconduct”?
- Problem owner: investigative committee

Solution 1

- No
 - The co-authors did not take part in the misconduct i.e. collaborative works
 - Reliability of co-authorship
 - Drop in quality and value of science

Solution 2

- Yes
 - According to the ICMJE standard co-authors are responsible for the content of a paper
 - Does everyone know about this standard?
 - It should mean something to be a co-author
 - Decrease in ghost/guest/gift authorships
 - Affects “innocent” persons and affiliations

Solution 3

- It depends
 - The co-authors agreed on publishing the study, although each co-author contributed differently
 - Modern science is very specialized
 - Interdisciplinary work and big collaborations
 - But who did what?
 - Contributing list
 - Head of laboratories; supervisors

Conclusion

- Modern science is specialized, is it reasonable to always keep co-authors responsible?
- Assessing contributions are hard
- The potential gain from the fraudulent paper

Do you really want to have your
name on *that* paper?

Thank you!