



## Authorship Guidelines

May 2021

Maintaining scientific credibility depends on complete and correct authorship, as well as accuracy in reporting the research results. To support a culture of integrity and trust, investigators must not take credit for the published or unpublished works of others or refer to such work without proper attribution and/or permission (i.e., engage in plagiarism). This plagiarism standard applies to all forms of publications, including, but not limited to the following: articles, papers, reports, books, presentations, posters, abstracts, and grant applications.

The Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center's (MSK) Authorship Guidelines provide minimum requirements for Authorship and Acknowledgements. Many of these suggested guidelines have been developed based on those established by the **International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE)**. See "[Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors](#)." According to these ICMJE guidelines, "All persons designated as authors should qualify for authorship, and all those who qualify should be listed." MSK recognizes that many journals may have additional requirements. An author must comply with any additional authorship requirements of the journal to which a manuscript has been submitted.

### Criteria for Authorship:

The criteria for authorship are that an author must have made a significant or substantial intellectual or technical contribution to the research and must have made an effort to understand and critique the contributions of all the other authors. All authors are responsible for recognizing and disclosing to the other authors any financial or non-financial conflicts of interest that might bias their work.

Authorship should be based on the following four (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

Two critical safeguards in the publication of accurate scientific reports are the active participation of each author in the research and his/her verification of that part which is his/her individual contribution. However, all authors must assume responsibility for the validity of all the evidence presented in the research paper and will be held accountable by the scientific community and the public.

### Ghost and Honorary Authorship:

"Ghost-writing" is a practice whereby a commercial entity writes an article or manuscript and a researcher, clinician, or otherwise recognized expert in a particular field of study is named as an author. MSK staff members may not participate in publications or presentations that are controlled by industry or that contain substantial portions written by someone who is not identified as an author or who is not properly acknowledged (i.e., that are ghost-written). This includes papers or presentations featuring data that were simply presented to the named author (without the opportunity for that person to analyze directly, perform calculations, review and/or question the data). Making minor revisions to an article, manuscript, or presentation that is ghost-written does not justify authorship.

Guest, honorary, or courtesy authorships, where the named author did not contribute consistent with the criteria for authorship listed above are contrary to the principles of this guidance and, as such, are also prohibited.

### Considerations for Order of Authors:

- The sequence of author listing should be determined by the relative contributions to the work. In the instance that equal credit is due, this should be footnoted, and authors should be listed alphabetically.

- Ideally, decisions about authors and the order in which their names appear should be discussed as early as possible, even before any work begins, and should be part of an ongoing dialogue that is revisited throughout the length of the project under the guidance of the Principal Investigator.
- For large, multi-centered trials, the list of clinicians and centers is typically published, along with a statement of individual contributions made.

**Acknowledgments vs. Authorship:** Many elements essential for a publication should be credited, but do not warrant authorship. People who provide facilities or resources, for instance, may be credited in the Acknowledgments section.

The following activities are not sufficient to warrant authorship:

- Participating solely in acquisition of funding
- Participating solely in collection of data
- Proofreading and editing services
- Supervising the overall activities of the research group

Authors have the ethical responsibility to acknowledge all of those who made the research and manuscript possible. Because agreement with the contents of a manuscript might be inferred, it is good practice to obtain the permission of anyone who is acknowledged in the manuscript.

### **Acknowledge the funding**

No one would dispute the necessity to cite references when using other people's (or your own) prior work. Equally important is to properly cite funding sources – with funding from the National Institutes of Health this is a must, but all funding should be declared, including any funding from external entities whether domestic or foreign, in addition to any financial conflicts of interest that might appear to affect or influence the research results.

For more information on acknowledging federal funding sources, see the [MSK NIH Public Access Policy](#) and [CCSG Publication Compliance Policy](#).

### **Questions Concerning Authorship:**

If disputes or questions concerning authorship have not been successfully resolved among the members of a collaboration, concerned individuals may seek help in resolving the issues from the following administrative officials, in this order: a) the department chair, division head, service chief, program chair or similar first line of academic management, b) the Director of Sloan Kettering Institute for those with primary SKI appointments or the Physician-in-Chief for those with Memorial Hospital primary appointments. However, if these matters involve allegations or evidence of research misconduct, they must immediately be brought to the attention of the Research Integrity Officer per the Policy and Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct (see [RTM-1001](#)).