



## Topics for Discussion:

### ***Responsible Authorship***

### ***Peer Review; Collaboration; Contemporary Ethical Issues in Biomedical Research***

#### ***Topic Overview***

Scientific recognition for novel research advances is typically based in the timely report and interpretation of data in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. Which authors are listed as contributors to published research, and the order of authorship, determines who gets credit for important intellectual effort and can be a significant factor in meeting degree requirements or gaining promotion or tenure. Authorship also entails responsibility, both with respect to the honest attribution of credit and as a guarantee of the quality and integrity of the reported work.

#### ***Assigned Readings***

Hvistendahl M. China's publication bazaar. *Science* (New York, N.Y.). Nov 29 2013; 342(6162):1035-1039.

Kearney MH. Be a responsible co-author. *Research in nursing & health*. Feb 2014; 37(1):1-2.

- In the *Science* article the focus is on China, but these issues occur in many countries, including the U.S. The article mentions several publication abuse issues (e.g., buying papers outright, paying for author slots, ghostwriting, etc.). Which type of abuse do you regard as the worst from a research integrity standpoint? Why?
- Why do you think the “publication bazaar” has become a booming business? What U.S. societal, system, or institutional changes might prevent or address these issues?
- Some prominent journals require statements of authors’ contributions. Thinking of your own experiences, how easy is it (or has it been) to describe the contributions of individual authors for research? Are all authors equally responsible when credit or blame for research is assigned? Why or why not?
- Have you ever been involved in (or heard about) an authorship dispute? What was the nature of the disagreement and how was it resolved?

#### ***Resources and Additional References***

- Roederer M, Marciniak MW, O'Connor SK, Eckel SF. An integrated approach to research and manuscript development. *American journal of health-system pharmacy*. Jul 15 2013; 70(14):1211-1218.
- Academic Honesty: Cheating and Plagiarism, Committee on Academic Conduct in the College of Arts and Sciences, University of Washington, <http://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>
- The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors “Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors,” <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html>
- Responsible Authorship and Peer Review. RCR Module, Columbia University, [http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/rcr/rcr\\_authorship/](http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/rcr/rcr_authorship/)



## Challenges to Research Integrity: Rubric for Analysis

Ethical analysis provides a means to clarify a dilemma, identify the values involved, and determine a course of action. A useful approach is to think in terms of the following steps:

- Recognition**     *What are the issues being raised? What is the underlying ethical concern? How does this issue impact me?*
- Reasoning**     *What values are at stake? Are there competing points of view? What are the potential benefits and harms of different actions? Are there any rules or guidelines that can help?*
- Responsibility**     *What are my responsibilities? Do others have responsibilities also?*
- Response**     *What should I do—and why?*

### Example Application

You have been involved in an exciting study with an investigator at another research institution, for which data collection and analysis is nearly complete. Your collaborator, who contributed the raw data that your group then analyzed, suggests in an email that he would like to take the lead in writing the main manuscript describing the study. This comes as a bit of a surprise because you had always assumed that you would be the first author of any joint publication.

#### Recognition

*What are the issues being raised? What is the underlying ethical concern? How does this impact me?*

The issue is that you and your collaborator have different expectations regarding who should receive the most credit for your joint research project. The concern is that your group's analytical efforts will go unrecognized and that this may negatively impact your ability to secure additional research funds or academic promotion.

#### Reasoning

*What values are at stake? Are there competing points of view? What are the potential benefits and harms of different actions? Are there any rules or guidelines that can help?*

You and your collaborator each have compelling reasons to seek lead authorship, and certainly the project would not have succeeded without *both* data and analysis. Moreover, any future collaboration rests in settling the disagreement to everyone's satisfaction. Journal authorship guidelines will provide guidance, as will a frank discussion of the relative contributions (in terms of time, expertise, etc.) of the two groups.

#### Responsibility

*What are my responsibilities? Do others have responsibilities also?*

Your responsibility is to initiate an open conversation about authorship expectations with your collaborator and to work toward an effective compromise acceptable to you both.

#### Response

*What should I do—and why?*

Suggest a phone call to discuss publication plans and authorship expectations with your collaborator. This will help preserve the working relationship and address your concerns.