

**Ansari Mukhtar**

Chief Executive Editor, MED PHOENIX

### ABSTRACT

The trend of honorary authorship is proliferating mainly in research papers from developing nations where resources are scarce, and the concept of research and publication is in growing stage. The practice of gifted authorship is unethical and unacceptable, and thus it should be discouraged.

**Keywords:** Authorship, Gift, Medical writing

**Corresponding Author:** Dr. Mukhtar Ansari, Chief Executive Editor, MED PHOENIX; E-mail: mukhtaransari@hotmail.com; medphoenix@nmcbir.edu.np


It is imperative to disseminate new ideas, thoughts, research findings and innovations among the scientific communities of the world to make them useful and fruitful. And, scientific writing is the most favored means to do so. For this, research outcomes, ideas or concepts need to be published in peer reviewed scholarly journals. There is a very popular quotation “Publish or Perish” to emphasize the culture of publishing the research findings.

In recent time, as the number of journals is increasing day by day, the practice of including gifted authors in papers is also proliferating. In many research papers published in and from developing countries, a long list of authors are included who are either from the same department or other departments of the same or different institutions. In fact, the research is designed and carried out by one or two authors and the rest are honorary authors. Sometimes, an author has not contributed at all but becomes the first or second author of the paper and this concept is based on mutual understanding between the actual contributor and the gifted one.

There can be several reasons for gifted authorship. Publications are important for promotion in academic post or ranking, junior researchers may be pressured by senior and departmental head to include their name, young researchers may believe that including experienced colleagues or renowned faculties as authors will increase their chances of publication, and also to increase collaboration among authors.<sup>1</sup>

Authorship matters because authors are responsible and accountable for the published work. However, there are certain criteria that need to be fulfilled by all of the contributors to be credited as authors of the manuscript, and their sequence should appear as per their contributions. To avoid confusion about authorship, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommends four criteria to be met by each of the contributors to become author of a published work.<sup>2</sup>

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or acquisition of data; or the analysis, or interpretation of data for the work.

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- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content.
  - Final approval of the version to be published.
  - 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.

It is not necessary that one can only be considered as part of a published paper or scientific writing if he is one of the authors. In reality, those who do not meet the above four criteria can also be part of the paper and they can be acknowledged in the acknowledgement section of the manuscript. Examples of activities that alone (without other contributions) do not qualify a contributor for authorship is acquisition of funding; general supervision of a research group or general administrative support; and writing assistance, technical editing, language editing, and proofreading.

Regardless of the cause, gifted authorship is an unethical and unacceptable practice. Therefore, it should be discouraged.

## REFERENCES

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