# 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

**Authorship Issues from Disbanded Consortium:** 

https://bit.lv/2FDQqom

Withdrawal Request by an Author: https://bit.ly/2E4jJaE

#### Relevant Flowcharts:

How to Spot Authorship Problems: https://bit.ly/2EjK3B4

Suspected Ghost, Guest or Gift Authorship: https://bit.ly/2E28akf

Request for Removal of Author After Publication:

https://bit.lv/2Eq31ID

What to do if you Suspect Systematic Manipulation of the Publication Process: https://bit.ly/2RJo3CN

#### References:

- 1. COPE Discussion Document on Best Practice for Issues Around Theses Publishing. https://bit.ly/2s6nNpu
- 2. COPE Webinar: Common Authorship Issues Faced by COPE Members. https://bit.ly/2nEmskR
- 3. ELearning module on Authorship (Members only). https://bit.ly/2BWJ6tj
- 4. Promoting Awareness of Good Authorship Practice. Siu-wai Leung https://bit.ly/2GPy7Fx
- 5. A Systematic Review of Research on the Meaning, Ethics and Practices of Authorship Across Scholarly Disciplines. Ana Marušić et al https://bit.ly/2gxQbgp
- 6. Publication Practices in Multidisciplinary Teams: A Closer Look at Authorship Assignment and Ranking. Drs Zubin Master and Bryn Williams-Jones https://bit.ly/2nKQtyL
- 7. Transparency in Authors' Contributions and Responsibilities to Promote Integrity in Scientific Publication. PNAS, Marcia K. McNutt et al https://bit.ly/2xyPQ01
- 8. Ghost Authorship in Industry-Initiated Randomised Trials. Peter C. Gøtzsche et al https://bit.ly/2SVGIBT
- 9. Authors, Ghosts, Damned Lies, and Statisticians. Elizabeth Wager http://bit.ly/2E3zeQ6

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

ea, a simple case report with a dozen authors or a randomised trial with a single author

Ouestionable roles of contributors

eg, it appears that no one drafted the paper or analysed the data

A similarity check shows work derived from a thesis where the original author is not on the author list or acknowledged

Corresponding author seems unable to respond to reviewers' comments

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

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by someone not on the author list or acknowledged 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

Tracking in manuscript shows that authors have been added or removed

> Bear in mind there may be legitimate reasons for this

> > Impossibly prolific author

eg, a head of department as senior author

Authorship changes without notification during revision stages

Several similar articles have been published under different author names or aliases

problems

This may be detected by an online search or plagiarism check

## Best Practice to Minimise Authorship Problems



Adopt policies that allow for transparency around who contributed to the submitted work and in what capacity



Facilitate awareness of emerging standards eq, ORCID and CRediT

**ENCOURAGE** 



Check for unusual patterns of behaviour which may suggest authorship problems

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