

## EDITORIAL

### Issues and Rules for Authors Concerning Authorship Versus Acknowledgements, Dual Publication, Self Plagiarism, and Salami Publishing

#### AUTHORSHIP

All of the issues discussed in this editorial have been raised by authors, by students, by faculty, and by other editors.

Decisions about authorship may seem straight forward, but in reality, they can become quite complex. This topic is less a problem in nursing than in many other fields where there is a tradition of including mentors or department chairs as authors, even if they have not contributed in a significant way to the article. In order to avoid contention, however, the topic should be discussed by all investigators as early in a project as possible, with agreement about ground rules on who will be included in the author list and what criteria will determine order of inclusion. Although authorship discussion begins early, it should be on-going, as participation may change during the course of a study or in the writing of a article.

Within nursing and other social sciences, most authors and editors refer to the guiding rules for inclusion established by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001). The authors of the *APA Publication Manual* stated, "Authorship is reserved for people who make primary contribution to and hold primary responsibility for the data, concepts, and interpretation of results for a published work" (p. 6). In most cases all authors will have a role in writing the manuscript, although some who do not write but who made "substantial scientific contributions" (p. 6) will be included. Other published guidelines require meeting three conditions: substantive contributions, participation in writing, and final approval (Yoshikawa & Ouslander, 2007). Examples of substantial contributions include formulating the question, problem, or hypotheses; structuring the study design; organizing and conducting analyses; interpreting the results; or writing a large part of the article.

In all cases, all authors should take responsibility for reviewing the initial version before it is submitted to a journal and for reviewing any revisions before resubmission. The APA authors

specifically noted that being department chair does not qualify for authorship (APA, 2001, p. 395). Three other helpful sources are available for guidance related to authorship (Foster, 2006; McKneally, 2006; Rennie, Yank, & Emanuel, 1997).

Another problem related to authorship occurs when a company hires a ghost writer to write an article and offers to put a scientist's name on it as author for credibility. This option has been offered to nurse scientists. It should be recognized as not acceptable.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Examples of contributions that would qualify a person for acknowledgment but not authorship include data collection and entry, advising about analysis, and recruiting participants (APA, 2001, p. 350). Participants in a study also may be acknowledged. Commonly, the acknowledgement is made in association with the rationale (e.g., Many thanks to Dr. Jane Doe who helped us think through the organization of this article, or thanks to Michael Black for data collection).

#### DUAL OR DUPLICATE PUBLICATION AND SELF-PLAGIARISM

This issue occurs on a continuum of acceptability. At one end of a continuum (the lowest) this involves not only submitting the same article to multiple journals, but also publishing the article in multiple journals. Slightly up the continuum would be submitting and publishing the same results from a study in multiple journals, substantially but not completely the same. Multiple publications such as this, sometimes with differing author credits, inflate the importance of the work conducted, making it seem that the results rather than the publications have been replicated. This applies not only for the full article, but also when

the results have already been published previously as an abstract in another journal. This does not apply, generally, when a brief abstract was published in conference proceedings.

Self-plagiarism involves copying language or information from one of one's own articles into another article. This can be a particularly difficult issue for longitudinal research. There are excellent publications on the topic (Broome, 2004; Hegyvary, 2005; Lowe, 2003; Roig, 2006; Samuelson, 1994). A friend's advice is to start each new article from scratch, instead of trying to adapt it from your earlier publications. I have had to work out this issue closely with a number of authors, and recommend always referencing the previous publications, not using the same wording without quotation marks and citation to self, and to refer back to the earlier publication rather than repeating all details (e.g., the recruitment of participants is described in Author [year]), providing enough detail is given to inform independent review. If this is not done, publication of your data may be jeopardized, as the problem will likely be noticed during the review process, even by blinded reviewers. A new software tool for catching self plagiarism is Splat (2007).

It is important to know that if authors want to repeat or adapt part of an earlier article they wrote (e.g., a table or a figure) they must contact the publisher of the publication in which it originally appeared for permission to republish. The same is true for re-publishing in another language or reprinting an article in a new journal for a different audience. Both editors and publishers need to approve.

### **SALAMI PUBLISHING OR THE LPU (LEAST PUBLISHABLE UNIT)**

Although there are many good reasons for publishing the output of a study in more than one article, there are also blatant attempts to wring too many articles from one study. An acceptable example of publishing multiple articles would include publishing the literature review separately, and then publishing the results from two different groups of participants in two other articles. Two unacceptable examples drawn from articles I have rejected include one in which the author had developed an instrument, published the validity information in one article and wanted to publish a second article on reliability. A second unacceptable example was a publication of a study comparing two samples on several variables. The author wanted to publish a second article on

the results for one of those samples on the same variables using different methods of analysis. In both cases, there was important information to be published, but it should have been included in the initial publications.

This type of problem is commonly identified by reviewers or Associate Editors. In the review process for this journal, we ask authors to submit to the editor copies of any previous or in-development articles from the same data set. The safest way to avoid accusations of dual or salami publishing is to consult with the editor, always cite and reference the previous article, and provide the editor with copies of related articles from the same data set. When editors discover these problems themselves, the article is likely to be rejected out of hand. If the discovery is made after publication, editors must publish public retractions, which are likely to have repercussions for the author or authors. Everyone whose name is listed as an author bears responsibility for ethical publication.

### **GUIDANCE**

Two other excellent references available to guide authors on the ethics of publication are: Committee on Publication Ethics (n.d.) and International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (2006). If you have questions, always consult the editor, and follow these rules:

- (1) Authorship signifies substantial contribution to the work. Be prepared to confirm this.
- (2) Never submit the same article or substantially the same article to different journals.
- (3) Avoid using the same wording, even in the literature review or methods sections, in multiple articles.
- (4) If a article has already been published from the same study, this work should be cited in the article submitted for review. Copies of that work and of any articles under development from that study should also be submitted to the editor when you submit.
- (5) Authors should seek the guidance of editors when they are uncertain.

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