Ethics and Etiquette in Scientific Publication: Authorship and More

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Overview

• Ethics, etiquette, and beyond
• Authorship—principles and other points
• Some other areas posing issues
• Responsibilities of editors and peer reviewers (from CSE White Paper)
• Some resources
• Open discussion
Introductory Notes

• This presentation
  – Intended primarily for early-career researchers
  – Some overlap with session in research-ethics course
  – Often not answers but issues and approaches

• Rationale: Awareness of norms and principles of publication ethics can aid in
  – Avoiding inadvertent violations
  – Reaching reasonable solutions
Introductory Notes (cont)

• Some items helpful in resolving dilemmas
  – Transparency
  – Open communication
  – Willingness to seek expert guidance from written and human sources

• Cross-cultural differences in publication etiquette (and perhaps publication ethics)
  – Among countries
  – Among disciplines
Ethics, Etiquette, and Beyond
Ethics, Etiquette, and Beyond

• Ethics: doing what’s right
• Etiquette: doing what’s polite
• Perhaps put another way:
  – Ethics: Don’t be a crook!
  – Etiquette: Don’t be a jerk!
  – Beyond: Be an Aggie?
• Examples in scientific publication . . .
Scientific Publication: Examples of Being a Crook

• Fabricating findings
• Falsifying data
• Plagiarizing
• Other
Scientific Publication: Examples of Being a Jerk

- Submitting a paper to multiple journals at the same time
- Disregarding instructions to authors
- Submitting superficial or rude peer reviews
- Returning page proofs late
- Other
Scientific Publication:
Examples of Going Beyond

- Mentoring more junior researchers in scientific writing
- Being considerate to journal staff
- Being generous with acknowledgments
- Making peer reviews gracious and educational
- Other
Authorship: Principles and Other Points
Qualifying for Authorship

• Basic requirement: major intellectual input into the research
• Not sufficient in and of itself: contributing patients, allowing use of equipment, providing cell lines, or such
• Not related to one’s educational level or job title
A Prominent Set of Criteria

• From the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (www.icmje.org): “Authorship credit should be based on 1) substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and 3) final approval of the version to be published. Authors should meet conditions 1, 2, and 3.”
Some Other Points on Authorship

• Should list as authors
  – All the people qualifying for authorship
  – Only the people qualifying for authorship

• Also at some journals: “contributorship” (listing of each person’s contribution)

• Helpful to readers: listing one’s name the same way on each paper
Order of Authors

• Conventions vary among disciplines
• In biomedical fields, typical to list in order of decreasing contribution (exception: head of research group often listed last)
• In cases with essentially equal contributions, sometimes can designate co-first authors or take turns serving as first author
• Helpful to start discussing early who the authors will be and in what order they will be listed
Some Other Areas Posing Issues
Accuracy

• Providing complete data (not only those supporting your hypothesis)
• Avoiding inappropriate manipulation of images such as photographs
• Using appropriate statistical procedures
Originality

• Not republishing the same findings (except under special circumstances, with the original source cited)
• Not submitting the same manuscript to two or more journals at once
• Not dividing one modest-sized research project into many little papers (“salami science” or “cucumber science”)
Credit

• Citing sources of information and ideas (also aids credibility, helps in finding out more)

• Avoiding excessive use of others’ words
  – Making note of sources when copying items or taking notes
  – Placing in quotation marks, or indenting, items used verbatim
  – Perhaps drafting some items while not looking at the source materials
Credit (continued)

• Observing copyright and obtaining needed permissions
  – Many journal websites have sections for obtaining permissions.
  – Copyright Clearance Center often can be of help.
Other

• Documenting ethical treatment of humans and animals
• Disclosing conflicts of interest (financial, other)
• Perhaps most fundamentally:
  – Indeed reporting one’s research
  – Doing so in an appropriate journal
  – Writing clearly and readably
Responsibilities of Others
Responsibilities of Editors and Peer Reviewers to Authors

Some Resources
On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research, 3rd edition (2009)

- From the US National Academies
- Largely for graduate students
- Available at http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12192
- Video also posted
Other Resources

  - From the Council of Science Editors
  - Posted at http://www.councilscienceeditors.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3331

- **Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)** (http://publicationethics.org/)
And Some Other Resources

• *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper, 7th edition*, by Robert A. Day and Barbara Gastel

• Intensive Course in Research Writing
  – June 24–July 12 (3 weeks): meets daily 9 to noon
  – Includes writing or revising a scientific paper section by section; discussion of ethics integrated throughout
  – Graduate students can take as VIBS 655
  – Others (postdocs, junior faculty, visiting scholars, et al) can take as a professional development course; further information available from Barbara Gastel
AuthorAID (www.authoraid.info)
Open Discussion
Wishing you all the best!