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# Research Integrity & Publishing Ethics

A whistlestop tour of common ethical  
pitfalls of well-intentioned  
researchers

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# Top 7 Ethics Pitfalls of Well-Intentioned Researchers:



1. Matters of authorship
2. Non-compliance with Generative AI policies
3. Image Manipulation
4. Plagiarism & textual overlap
5. Citation manipulation
6. Duplicate submissions
7. Involvement with predatory journals

# 1. Authorship: Qualifications, Disputes, & Changes



## Who is listed as an Author?

A researcher completes her paper.

- She consulted her advisor for guidance on the experiment, the data analysis, and writing and revising the final article.
- A professor at a different institution assisted her in analyzing the data only.
- A lab assistant helped her prepare the experimental design and maintained and operated the equipment.
- Two fellow grad students read her paper and edited it, though they had no hand in the experiment.

**Author**

**Acknowledgements**

# 1. Authorship: Qualifications, Disputes, & Changes

International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) recommends **authorship** based on meeting **all 4 criteria** below:

1. **Substantially contribute** to conception and **design**, or acquisition of **data**, or **analysis** and **interpretation** of data
2. **Draft** the article or **revise** it critically for important intellectual content
3. **Give their approval of the final version** to be published
4. **Agree to be held accountable** for all aspects of the work in ensuring all research integrity questions are investigated and resolved

## First Authors (typically):

- ✓ Conducts and/or supervises data analysis and proper presentation and interpretation of results
- ✓ Puts paper together and submits

## Co-Author(s):

- ✓ Makes intellectual contributions to data analysis and interpretation
- ✓ Reviews each paper draft
- ✓ Must be able to present the results, defend the implication, and discuss limitations

- Decisions about who will be an author and the order of authors should be made before starting to write up your research.

# 1. Authorship: Qualifications, Disputes, & Changes

## Authorship Disputes

(including Ghost Authorship and author changes)

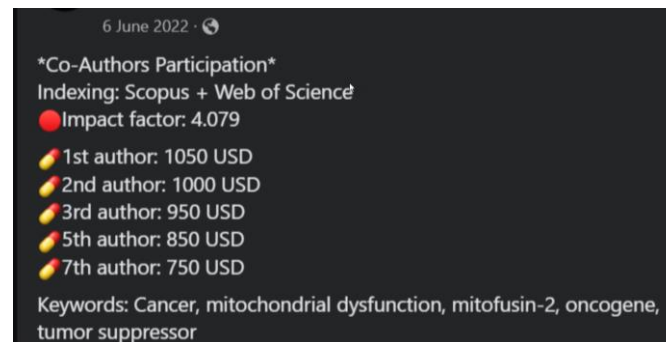
- Must be resolved by Authors
- Editors cannot adjudicate or act as judge
- ✓ Editor may require copy of internal investigations (e.g. from Institute officials)
- ✓ Editors will require written and signed agreement from all Authors with justification

### **Potential Outcomes:**

- Delayed Publication / Rejection
- Unresolved disputes likely NOT retracted; rather Expression of Concern
- Corrigendum issued pending Editor approval

**Gift and purchase of Authorship may result in one or more of the following consequences:**

- Retraction of the paper
- Notification to institute and/or funding bodies
- Ineligibility to serve on Editorial Boards
- Inability to submit to the journal again



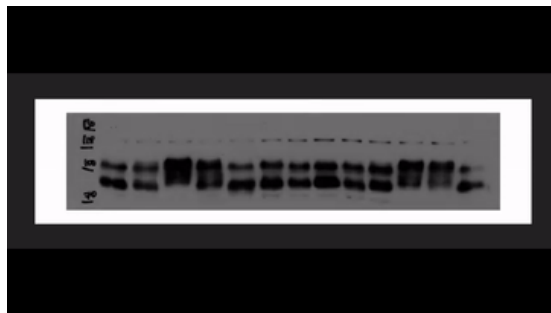
## 2. Compliance with Generative AI policies

Elsevier's policy<sup>1</sup> states that authors should:

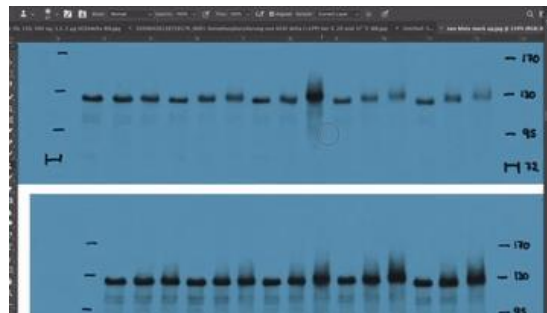
- Only use Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve **readability** and **language** of the work.
- Apply the technology with **human oversight** and control, as it can generate authoritative-sounding text that may be biased, incorrect, or incomplete.
- **Disclose** in their manuscript the use of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies.
- Not list Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies as an **author or co-author** or cite AI as an author.

<sup>1</sup> Policies are published on Elsevier's Publishing Ethics page: <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies/publishing-ethics>. Further guidance can be found in the [RELX Responsible AI Principles](#).

### 3. Image Manipulation



Adjustments of brightness, contrast, or color balance are acceptable as long as they do not obscure or eliminate any information present in the original.



It is not acceptable to enhance, obscure, move, remove, or introduce a specific feature within an image.



Manipulating images for improved clarity is accepted, but manipulation for other purposes could be seen as scientific ethical abuse and will be dealt with accordingly.

Image forensics tools/specialized software might be applied to submitted manuscripts to **identify suspected image irregularities.**

## 4. Plagiarism & Textual Overlap

- Using another work (typically the work of another author) without permission, credit, or acknowledgment.

### *Outright plagiarism (verbatim plagiarism)*

- **Reproducing a work word for word**, in whole or in part, **without permission** and acknowledgment of the original source.

### *Text recycling (self-plagiarism)*

- Overlapping sections of text with an **author's own** previously **published work**, often without attribution.

### *Paraphrasing*

- **Rephrasing text in your own words**, without citing sources drawn upon.
- Copying phrases, passages, or ideas then using synonyms to slightly modify before stitching together to create new text is referred to as **mosaic plagiarism**.



## 5. Duplicate vs. Simultaneous Submissions

### Multiple, redundant, or concurrent publications

- Manuscripts that describe essentially the same research and are published in more than one journal.
- Duplication of the same paper in multiple journals of different languages.
- “Salami Slicing”, or creating several publications from the same research.



**To save time, can I submit my paper to more than one journal in parallel?**

**No.** *Simultaneous submissions to more than one journal violates ethics policies.*



**What if I have shared my paper on a preprint server, would that be considered duplicate publication?**

**No.** *Elsevier allows responsible sharing on pre-print servers.*

## 6. Citation Manipulation



**How many red flags do you see in this revision decision letter?**



**Are you required to add in these references?**

**No.** As COPE recommends:  
“...any suggested citations...must advance the argument within the article.”

“There can be circumstances...which may improve the quality of the paper, but these should not be a condition of acceptance.”

<https://publicationethics.org/case/editor-and-reviewers-requiring-authors-cite-their-own-work>

Dear Author,

Thank you for submitting your paper to **Journal ABCD**. I have completed my evaluation of your manuscript. The reviewers recommend reconsideration of your manuscript following minor revision and modification. Your paper is likely to be accepted pending all the changes are made as indicated below.

...

Editor-in-Chief

Reviewer 1:

...

The authors have failed to mention the below leading papers. I strongly recommend the author includes the references listed below.

doi.org/10.1111/AAAA/reference1  
doi.org/10.2222/BBBB/reference2  
doi.org/10.1234/ABCD/reference3  
doi.org/10.1234/ABCD/reference4  
doi.org/10.1234/ABCD/reference5

## 7. Involvement with predatory journals

- “Predatory publishing...refers to the systematic for-profit publication of purportedly scholarly content... in a deceptive or fraudulent way and without any regard for quality assurance.”<sup>1</sup>

### Commonly co-occurring features<sup>1</sup>:

- Hidden or unclear author fees;
- The lack of quality peer review of articles by experts in the field;
- The guarantee of acceptance and/or very fast publication times (e.g. within one week or 48 hours).

### Check the following for warning signs of “fake” journals:

- Website
- Journal Name
- Peer Review Process
- Ownership & Management
- Editorial team/contact information
- Author fees
- Process for resolution of research misconduct
- Direct marketing

<sup>1</sup>[https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/cope\\_dd\\_a4\\_pred\\_publishing\\_nov19\\_screenaw.pdf](https://publicationethics.org/sites/default/files/cope_dd_a4_pred_publishing_nov19_screenaw.pdf)



# Questions?

## ***Resources:***

- [Equator Network Reporting Guidelines](#)
- [ICMJE Authorship](#)
- Elsevier Declaration Tool ([video](#))
- Elsevier Policy: [Conflict of Interest, Declarations, etc.](#)
- [Competing Interests Factsheet](#)
- Elsevier Policy: [Generative AI use](#) (Authors, Editors, Reviewers)
- [RELX Responsible AI Principles](#)
- STM Working Group on Image Alterations and Duplications: [video training modules and resources](#)
- COPE: [Text Recycling](#)

