



NWRC AUTHORSHIP POLICY VERSION 2.1

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INTRODUCTION

Collaborative research provides an opportunity for trainees of all levels to be involved in large-scale multicentre research projects and audits, with the prospect of becoming co-authors in high impact journals. These large scale projects often involve a large number of collaborators each with responsibility for a different aspect of the project. The level of involvement may range from data collection to project design and write up, and correspondingly varied levels of contribution. This policy aims to prevent issues arising around authorship by setting out clear guidance for the authorship of projects undertaken within the North West Research Collaborative (NWRC).

WHY DO WE NEED AN AUTHORSHIP POLICY?

Authorship implies responsibility and accountability for published work (1). The varied responsibility and levels of contribution of each collaborator can create conflicts during project publication. There is a need to ensure contributors are allocated appropriate credit for their work. Research groups and collaborators need to be clear about the criteria and plans for authorship (3) therefore it is important that the NWRC set out a transparent and fair policy. This document defines the key terms and roles and describes a framework through which new research should be presented and published.

DEFINITIONS

AUTHORSHIP

The American Physical Society states that *"All those who have made significant contributions should be offered the opportunity to be listed as authors. Other individuals who have contributed to the study should be acknowledged, but not identified as author"*, and that *"authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the concept, design, execution or interpretation of the research study"* (2). The ecological society of America suggest that authorship may legitimately be claimed if researchers have conceived the ideas or experimental design, participated actively in execution of the study, analyzed and interpreted the data or written the manuscript.

Within medicine the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) (1) has made recommendations where an individual should meet all 4 of the following criteria:

- 1. Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work**
- 2. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content**
- 3. Final approval of the version to be published**
- 4. 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.**

Our policy has adopted this definition from the ICMJE and where individuals do not meet all of the above criteria, they will be listed as a contributor or in the acknowledgements as outlined below.

FIRST AUTHOR

This is the author listed first in any manuscript or abstract submitted for publication or presentation. See the guidance below on deciding the order of authorship.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

The individual who takes primary responsibility for communication with the journal or conference. It is usually the first author for that particular manuscript/presentation/poster.

CO-AUTHOR(S)

A list of individuals to be credited with any publication of the work AND who meet all of the above criteria. Order will be decided by members of the steering group.

GUARANTOR

The guarantor accepts full responsibility for the work and/or the conduct of the study, had access to the data, and controlled the decision to publish (4). In an editorial published in the BMJ 2001; maintaining the integrity of the scientific record (5), the editor discusses the requirement for contributors to sign a statement that they accept full responsibility for the conduct of the study, had access to the data, and controlled the decision to publish. Therefore, as a requirement to satisfy the NWRC Authorship guidelines, at least one member of the steering group for each project should be named as a guarantor.

STEERING GROUP

Each project which is to be undertaken through the NWRC will have a steering group consisting of a group of collaborative members responsible for the development and completion of each project. It will be assumed that each member of this group would meet all 4 of the criteria for authorship and be involved from beginning to end. There will be a nominated individual within this group known as the Chief Investigator (see below).

CONTRIBUTORS

An individual who has been involved in the undertaking of the study may not be in the steering group or listed as an author, but have made a significant contribution to the study. Each individual will be named as a contributor, whose role is specified in any published work. The steering group for each project may specify minimum contribution to the study in order for that individual to be recognised as a contributor (i.e. minimum quantity of data collection). Examples of roles are described below.

CHIEF INVESTIGATOR

The primary member of the Steering group who takes overall responsibility for the design, conduct and reporting of the study (definition adopted from the NIHR Clinical Trials Toolkit).

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

A consultant responsible for overseeing the conduct of a study at a particular site, who reports directly to the Chief Investigator or designated member of the *Steering Group*. Their involvement in the study should be specified.

CLINICAL/LOCAL INVESTIGATORS

Person(s) responsible for data collection at each hospital site. One of the local investigators will likely be a member of the collaborative as an additional point of contact at each site in addition to the Principal Investigator. Each Clinical / Local investigator's contribution should be specified.

NON AUTHOR CONTRIBUTORS

These individuals do not meet the criteria for authorship above, but should be listed in the acknowledgement section of any report or manuscript. As defined by the ICMJE, they may have been involved in acquisition of funding; general supervision of a research group; general administrative support; writing assistance; technical editing; language editing and proofreading.

DISSEMINATION

NWRC encourages the submission of completed projects for presentation at professional meetings, where they may be accepted for poster or oral presentation. Many meetings and conferences also publish abstracts. It is the responsibility of the steering group to select the order in which authorship is stated. This may be the same or different order to previous presentations or publications; however, the following would be general accepted:

POSTER PRESENTATION

First authorship is given to the individual who has, as decided by the steering group, been assigned responsibility for production of the poster and attendance at the specified conference. The NWRC logo should be present on any poster or use the NWRC poster template and the list of authors should also state "*on behalf of NWRC*" with the logo visible on the poster. The other members of the steering group will be listed as co-authors and other contributors to the study should be listed in an acknowledgements

ORAL PRESENTATION

First authorship is given to the individual who has, as decided by the steering group, been assigned responsibility for production and delivery of an oral presentation at the specified conference. The NWRC logo should be present on the slides or use the NWRC PowerPoint template, and the list of authors should also state "*on behalf of NWRC*". The other members of the steering group will be listed as co-authors and other contributors to the study should be acknowledged by the speaker during the presentation.

ABSTRACT PUBLICATION

Order of authors to be determined by the steering group. Contributors would be listed at the end.

MANUSCRIPT PUBLICATION

The order of authors will be determined by the steering group. Contributors would be listed at the end such as outlined by the British Medical Journal (4) or as published by the EUPHRATES group, where the authors are listed, but where the contributors are fully citable (6). The Scottish Surgical Research Group (SSRG) (7) refer to a proposed model as followed by the FOXTROT trial published in Lancet Oncology, November 2012 (8), whereby the list of authors and contributors are broken down at the beginning of the article. The format of authorship will be determined by the individual journal to which the manuscript is submitted, however all contributors must be credited appropriately.

DELIBERATE OMISSION OF A CONTRIBUTOR TO A NWRC PROJECT IS NOT
ACCEPTABLE.

PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

REFERENCES

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6. *Effect of a collector bag for measurement of postpartum blood loss after vaginal delivery: cluster randomised trial in 13 European countries*. **WH, Zhang, et al.** 340:c293, Feb 2010, BMJ, Vol. 340:c293.
7. **Scottish Surgical Research Group (SSRG)**. Authorship Policy. *Scottish Surgeons*. [Online] [Cited: 5th November 2014.] <http://scottishsurgeons.com/authorship-policy.html>.
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