

# OMBUDS OFFICE

Harvard Medical School  
Harvard Dental School  
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health



## **AUTHORSHIP: Recommended Best Practices for Determining Authorship**

Familiarize yourself with the *HMS Authorship Guidelines* (found at [www.hms.harvard.edu/ombuds](http://www.hms.harvard.edu/ombuds) and [www.fa.hms.harvard.edu](http://www.fa.hms.harvard.edu)) and encourage the same of your colleagues and collaborators. If you oversee a lab, provide authorship guidelines to all newcomers to the lab and a description of the lab's usual ways of deciding authorship and authorship order.

1. Talk early about authorship and authorship order for each project's manuscript(s)
  - specific criteria to be used for your project
  - decision making process — who provides what input, how decisions are made, who has final say if a consensus agreement is not reached
  - how to address disagreements if they arise
2. When gathering input about contributions, ask everyone to put in writing and share:
  - her/his contributions
  - what s/he thinks every other author contributed (this can reveal misunderstandings and provides the opportunity for clarification)
3. If authorship determination seems straightforward, set forth authorship designations *but with a caveat that this could change if contributions change significantly*
4. Create a culture of transparency and collaboration and revisit the issue of specific authorship periodically in case contributions or assumptions about contributions have changed
5. If a disagreement arises, make every effort to resolve the dispute locally
  - among the authors
  - by involving the lab chief or other appropriate person
  - by involving the HMS/HSDM/HSPH Ombuds Office

### HMS Authorship Guidelines: Key Definitions and Responsibilities

- An author should have made a *substantial, direct, intellectual* contribution
- Funding and provision of technical services, patients, materials alone are not sufficient
- Everyone making a substantial intellectual contribution to the work should be author
- Everyone making other substantial contributions should be acknowledged
- All authors should review manuscript drafts and approve the final version
- One author should take primary responsibility for the whole work, including compiling a concise written description of everyone's contributions that all authors have approved and filing it with the sponsoring institution
- Authors should describe each author's contributions and how order was assigned to help readers interpret roles correctly



HMS/HSDM/HSPH OMBUDS OFFICE

© Melissa Brodrick, Ombudsperson, [melissa\\_brodrick@hms.harvard.edu](mailto:melissa_brodrick@hms.harvard.edu)

164 Longwood Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02115

617-432-4040 (Ombuds) 617-432-4041 (office)