AUTHORSHIP: Recommended Best Practices for Determining Authorship

Familiarize yourself with the HMS Authorship Guidelines (found at www.hms.harvard.edu/ombuds) and encourage the same of your colleagues and collaborators. Ask your PI or lab manager to 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)
   - Know the specific criteria to be used for your project
   - Know the decision making process—who provides what input, how decisions are made, who has final say
   - Know how your group will address disagreements if they arise

2. When gathering input about contributions, everyone should put in writing and share:
   - Her/his contributions
   - What s/he thinks every other author contributed (this can reveal misunderstandings and provide the opportunity for clarification)

3. If authorship determination seems straightforward, get the designations set forth but understand that this order could change if contributions change significantly

4. Contribute to a culture of transparency and collaboration. Ask questions. 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 PI (if the PI isn’t already involved)
   - By involving the HMS/HSDM/HSPH Ombuds Office
   - Be professional at all times

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
- Working within the publisher’s space guidelines, authors should describe each author’s contributions and how order was assigned to help readers interpret roles correctly