Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due

Honestly recognizing the true scholarly contributions to an article is essential for the accurate recording of intellectual property and for declaring authors’ accountability and responsibility for the content. All authors of a published work are to be fully accountable for its content, but certain authors—specifically the first and last of the listed authors—are even more so than all others. Well-regarded international guidelines exist to help with the determination of who meets the criteria to be recognized as an author, a contributor, or a collaborator,1,2 and these are widely adopted by scientific and specialty journals around the globe, including Cancer Nursing: An International Journal for Cancer Care. Diligent, consistent adherence to the ethics of authorship helps to ensure that credit is given where credit is due among authors.

Increasingly recognized is how challenging it can be to fairly acknowledge equal or very near equal contributions to an article by more than 1 person.3–5 The significant contributions may not fall neatly into a sequential order of greater to lesser. Some practical situations have helped to bring this discussion forward such as large multisite or international studies that required the expertise of more than a single person to successfully create, implement, and conclude the study. The number of such studies is increasing as are the number of authors per published article. However, it is not only the larger international study teams that face this challenge of equal credit for equal and significant contribution. The same concern about honest recognition can occur on a small study team conducting a single-site, complex study that requires the expertise of multiple authors in equal and significant amounts.

Defining “equal” and “significant” is an important effort for a study team, a research setting, a system of care, or a professional association and is not done without controversy.7,8 In our use of the word, equal does not mean interchangeable but instead of same or highly similar value. We, on behalf of Cancer Nursing: An International Journal for Cancer Care, seek to strongly encourage team approaches to science and the open sharing of ideas that could advance efforts to provide the most effective care for all affected by cancer. Team approaches may be the singularly best way to achieve the consistently complex aims of today’s emerging research studies and programs. Collaborators may be more likely to share ideas and other essential resources if credit can more accurately reflect the equally significant contributions of team members. We believe this applies to our journal and to cancer nursing research. Because of this, we are now formally announcing our support for assignments of more than 1 first author and more than 1 last (ie, senior) author (please refer to the Author Guidelines for this journal). A statement of authors’ contribution with a justification for the multiple role holders will be required with the accepted article as part of our efforts to continue to give honest credit to those deserving of it. With this editorial, we announce this new approach for our journal in which more than 1 author may be designated as first author and more than 1 author may be designated as senior author, and we announce the use of CRediT Integration (https://www.ariessys.com/views-and-press/resources/video-library/credit-integration/), an online tool that allows each author to individually identify his/her contribution to the work. Authors will be able to identify their contribution using the very same article submission process now in use by our journal. This approach helps to ensure that authors are given credit where it is due.

The return on this new journal procedure that we anticipate is an enhancement of scientific efforts in oncology nursing and perhaps the advancement of research aims to a higher level of complexity with a greater promise of clinical utility. The return we also anticipate is wider acknowledgement of those authors who genuinely deserve it and the reward for study team members of having done what is right to do.

Our very best to you,

–Pamela S. Hinds, PhD, RN, FAAN
Editor-in-Chief
Cancer Nursing: An International Journal for Cancer Care

–Amy Bedinger Miller
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–Angela Richardson
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References