MANUAL GUIDE
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION CDC-69
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AUTHORSHIP OF CDC OR ATSDR PUBLICATIONS

I. PURPOSE

This guide provides policies and processes to assist CDC* authors in developing and preparing manuscripts for publication.

II. BACKGROUND

Comments and suggestions solicited from members of the Excellence in Science Committee, the Office of the General Counsel, and the Procurement and Grants Office were incorporated in this document.

The planning and development process of a CDC project and preparation of manuscript(s) for publication should include consideration of these basic principles:

- Origin of idea.
- Development of outline for the project.
- Design and writing of an approved protocol.
- Responsibility for observations and acquisition of data.
- Scientific leadership in the execution of the study.
- Analysis and critical interpretation of the data (including the review of literature and evaluation of evidence).
- Writing the manuscript (drafting, revising, and reviewing).
- Responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.
- Ability to defend the content of the publication.

*References to CDC also apply to ATSDR

A minimum basis for authorship requires active participation in all of the following:

- The conception or design of work, data collection, and/or data analysis and interpretation of data.
- Drafting the manuscript or reviewing and revising critical sections. A critical section is defined as the specific portion of the manuscript for which a coauthor claims expert defense responsibility.
- Assuming responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.

CDC recognizes that no single set of rules governing all aspects of the assignment of authorship is likely to be developed and that authorship questions associated with each manuscript must be answered individually. Nevertheless, it is useful for CDC to have a set of principles and guidelines to facilitate and standardize decision making that involves authorship.

These guidelines in no way replace or supersede official CDC clearance procedures (Manual Guide—General Administration No. CDC-18); nor do they preclude the formulation of more complex and stringent procedures designed to meet the needs of specific organizational components within CDC. Rather, these guidelines should be considered as a 'universal' baseline, to be applied in all contexts within CDC in which authorship of agency-sponsored material is in question. Additional regulations, standards, and review processes can be developed and implemented as deemed desirable by individual components of the two agencies.

III. PROJECT PROTOCOL

A. Development

Prior to the beginning of a project, the following issues should be decided upon and put in writing:

- The number of manuscripts that are expected to evolve from the project.
- The subjects to be covered.
- The identity of all persons assigned to coauthor the reports.

These items should be included in the 'scope of work' if the project is to be generated under a grant, cooperative agreement, or contract.

Resolution of these issues calls for discussion among participants, agreement in advance, and interim discussions to confirm that original assignments are still appropriate or have been revised as needed. For example, circumstances during a study may change and contributions of designated coauthors may be substantially greater or less than originally anticipated. A final decision on manuscripts, subjects, and the identity and order of coauthors should be reached before beginning the first draft of a report.

B. Guidelines for Flexibility or Special Consideration

If in the course of a project, an individual who was not named in the protocol makes a major contribution to the project meriting coauthorship (e.g., would have originally been listed in the Acknowledgments or Technical Assistance sections), she or he should be added, in appropriate rank order, as a coauthor. If the project was undertaken with CDC funding, it may be necessary to make modifications in the contract, cooperative agreement, or grant.

IV. AUTHORSHIP CRITERIA

A. Description

Being the primary author or a coauthor is both an honor and a responsibility. Having one's name on a paper implies acceptance of responsibility for the facts and the conclusions of the paper. All coauthors should be able to defend the design, execution, and conclusions of the study if challenged. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to give more junior members of the investigative team opportunities to be first author whenever justifiable and feasible.

Given the degree of specialization and the complexity of today's research methods, each member of the publishing team must be able to defend their accredited contribution independently. Collectively, the team must be able to explicate and defend the content of the report. If a collaborator's contribution is too narrow to meet this description (e.g., involvement in study design but not in drafting or revising the report), that person should be given credit in some manner other than the assignment of coauthorship (see Section V).

No one should be listed as an author without his or her knowledge and expressed consent. Persons who qualify as coauthors may choose not to be given credit; for example, when it is necessary to protect the confidentiality of data from a given institution.

No person shall be listed as coauthor of a report merely by virtue of his or her position in the responsible organization. "Work done under the auspices. . ." does not constitute coauthorship--even if the person in question is Director (Head, Chief, Department Chair, etc.) of the organizational unit responsible for the work.

The average number of authors per communication is increasing. In part, this increase is due to the needs of projects for contributions from many individuals, frequently those with different specialized skills. While multiauthorship is not a problem in itself, it raises many issues such as criteria for inclusion as an author, ability of each author to evaluate and defend all aspects of a study, sequence of listing of authors, and separation of various results to increase numbers of communications and authorship citations. To clarify some of these concerns, consideration should be given in interdisciplinary studies to preparing brief statements of the exact contribution of each author to the work described in each communication.

B. Guidelines for Flexibility or Special Consideration

To minimize misunderstandings, the collaborating group should be systematic, careful, and open in identifying and assessing coauthorship expectations, entitlement, and order of appearance of names of coauthors. The CDC members of the planning group should be aware that they represent CDC to outside collaborators and should be sensitive to agency concerns about continuing productive relationships with outside agencies and individuals.

The extension of coauthorship by CDC to non-CDC staff (and vice versa) is sometimes a condition determining whether the agency will become involved in an investigation or will have access to data. Such an agreement is discouraged because it may not reflect the effort that is usually needed to warrant coauthorship. However, CDC staff may sometimes determine that such an agreement is in the public interest. If so, everyone must understand that this is an exception to the conditions of authorship otherwise described in this policy. It should in no way be construed to apply to extension of authorship privileges to individuals with supervisory responsibilities for an author's position in the CDC organization who did not make contributions to the publication material as described in the minimum conditions for authorship (see Section II).

Criteria for authorship on studies done under contract should be the same as for studies conducted by CDC staff. Contract language should be written and reviewed for adherence to CDC authorship guidelines. According to regulations, contractors cannot ‘sponsor’ any work without approval from a CDC employee. Since all work done under contract is the property of the Federal government, scientists working under contract have expressed concern about potential limitations on their ability to publish the results of their studies. Contractors should have manuscripts reviewed by CDC staff as part of a peer review process prior to submission for publication. However, scientists working under contract have the right to submit manuscripts for publication without CDC approval if the contract language does not specifically prohibit such publication. Manuscripts which have not been subjected to formal CDC clearance or approval should have a clear disclaimer to that effect. Authorship issues should be discussed and agreed to before and during the course of a project to assure that contributions are credited appropriately. If significant changes occur in contributions by authors during the course of the project and manuscript preparation, the contract should be amended to credit authors' contributions accordingly.

C. Determination of Primary Author

The primary author should be determined by assessing actual contributions in the conception, planning, and execution of the study. On occasion, when two or more investigators have contributed equally or nearly equally to a project, the one who actually writes the paper and coordinates the editorial review process should be listed as the primary author. If the primary author fails to produce a draft manuscript within an agreed-upon time frame and someone else prepares the first draft of the report, the latter collaborator should be listed as the primary author.

D. Listing of Secondary Authors

1. Criteria

Secondary authors should be listed in a sequence generally consistent with the magnitude and pertinence of their input, as judged by the collaborating group.

2. Guidelines for Flexibility or Special Consideration

The primary author should remember that an individual's contribution will often be judged to be substantially greater by that individual than by his or her colleagues. If a collaborator's contributions are not of a magnitude that warrants coauthorship credit, such contribution should be appropriately listed in the Acknowledgments section (see Section V).

V. CREDIT LINES OTHER THAN AUTHORSHIP

A. Criteria

Although not listed as coauthors, individuals who have provided special assistance in the study should be given credit.

B. Guidelines for Flexibility or Special Consideration

Persons who have contributed intellectually to the paper but whose contributions do not justify coauthorship may be listed in an Acknowledgment section and their contributions described (e.g., advice,

critical review of the study proposal, data collection, participation in the clinical trial, editorial assistance, clerical assistance).

Such persons must have given their permission for the author to include their names in the Acknowledgment section. This permission should be obtained during the early stages of manuscript preparation/review so that contributors are aware of where and how their names will appear.

In journals that accept a Technical Assistance byline, the names of those who provided support or service functions (e.g., laboratory technologists, statistical assistants, photographers, illustrators, computer operators, reference librarians, contractors, and clerical assistants) should be listed there. In other journals, these individuals and others who helped in one way or another, but not to the extent of meriting coauthorship, should be included in the Acknowledgment or other type of credits section.

VI. MANUSCRIPT APPROVAL BEFORE PUBLICATION

A. Drafts

Each draft of a manuscript should be shared with all coauthors. Such drafts should include authorship and other credits to prevent misunderstandings and promote timely resolution of disagreements. If copyrighted material is incorporated into the manuscript, the material should be properly attributed and, in some cases, permission to use the copyrighted work may be necessary.

B. Final

All coauthors must approve the manuscript before it is submitted for clearance and publication.

C. Guidelines for Flexibility or Special Consideration

If the primary author is from CDC, he or she should obtain a written statement from any outside coauthor that the following conditions have been met:

- The coauthor approves the report as he or she has reviewed it.
- The coauthor has obtained all necessary clearance from his or her institution.

If the primary author is not from CDC, then the senior CDC author is responsible for approval and clearance through appropriate CDC channels.

VII. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Laws, regulations, policies, and guidelines are insufficient to prevent intentional unethical conduct. However, the failure to carefully consider ethical principles can cause significant harm to personal and institutional credibility and erode public trust. It is particularly important for CDC authors and peer reviewers to consider the following principles:

- Redundant and duplicate publications

  All manuscripts are assumed to be primary publications, unless a full statement of prior or partial publication is included when the paper is submitted to the journal editor.

  Exceptions to this rule may be publications in another language or country. All individual circumstances cannot be addressed in these guidelines, but the prevailing rule is that full detail of prior publication must be submitted to the editor, if applicable. (Exception rules have been formulated by *The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors*, published in The New England Journal of Medicine, Vol. 324, No. 6, Feb.7, 1991, Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals.)

- Disclosure of potential conflict of interest

  Conflict of interest exists when an author or reviewer has ties to activities that could inappropriately influence objective evaluation of the scientific methods and conclusions described in the manuscript.

  Financial and personal relationships as well as professional competition are important areas to examine for potential conflicts of interest.

  Known or potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed in a statement included in the cover letter to the editor when a paper is submitted for publication. This letter must be signed by all authors.

- Plagiarism

  Plagiarism is the act of claiming credit for passages, ideas, or quotations from someone else's work. Careful attention to proper accreditation is an increasingly stringent requirement in today's electronic document environment.

  Plagiarism is included in the Federal definition of reportable scientific misconduct.

The Associate Director for Science, Office of the Director, is the primary official responsible for all matters related to scientific misconduct at CDC.

VIII. ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

CDC agrees with The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors who include in their definition of published material the dissemination of

information through an electronic journal. Therefore, electronic publications should be included in all considerations as described in Section VII.

IX. COPYRIGHT

Works created by Federal employees as part of their official duties cannot be copyrighted in the United States. Upon acceptance of a manuscript for publication, Federal authors should submit to journals a notice (suggested format available from the Office of the General Counsel) that the work is a work of the United States government and, therefore, there is no copyright to transfer. If a journal will not accept this notice and requests that an author sign the journal's copyright transfer form, the journal's form should be submitted to the Office of the General Counsel for review. If there are multiple authors, some of whom are non-Federal, the Federal employee should submit to journals a notice (suggested format available from the Office of the General Counsel) that the agency considers the article a work of the United States government and, thus, they have no copyright to transfer. In some cases, the Federal contribution to the article might be so insignificant that the Federal government would not assert that it is a work of the United States.

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