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**COBRA Authorship**

**rules and responsibilities**

**The order of authorship**

The credit associated with a manuscript is usually judged by the order in the byline. Traditionally, the first author is the one who does the maximum work and the last name is reserved for the head or the most senior colleague. However, with the changes in literature indexing policies (listing only three, six, or twenty four names), and non-uniform policies of journals, even this aspect has been debated at length. The various suggestions have been to list authors by alphabet, by seniority and by importance of contribution. The most accepted and the logical one is that the order should be based on the relative contribution: the one with the maximum contribution should lead the list while the one with the least input should bring up the rear [1].

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| **How to avoid authorship disputes** |   |  |

Following Facts and Rules are designed to cover all possible cases, RULEs are based on the FACTs. FACTs are the principles of the authorship [2].

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| **FACTs** |
| 1 | At least tentative decisions on authorship should be made, at the beginning of the study, after the potential authors have agreed on its design.  |
| 2 | All authors are responsible for their tasks and they should be done on time. |
| 3 | Author 1 and author 2 and last author are the key authors |
| 4 | Author 1 has the idea and does the most |
| 5 | Author 2 is the second most |
| 6 | Last author is senior author, grant owner, head or supervisor |

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| **RULEs** |
| 1 | Get a signed agreement. Use Vision Form at the initial level. For future amendments, use Memorandum Form.  |
| 2 | Tasks for each author should be assigned at the Vision Form. |
| 3 | Do not change the order of authorship, or delete or add names once it is finalized, without the consent of all the contributors, the new as well as the old ones. |
| 4 | Acknowledge, with permission, all the help that made the study possible. |
| 5 | If you are using data someone else obtained, who is not available for writing or is not willing to write, take his permission to use his data. |
| 6 | Discuss before disclosing: in case a dispute arises, discuss amongst you before disclosing the dispute to others. |
| 7 | Make sure that no one is deprived of the deserving rights of authorship. A reasonable way to decide whether a contribution is important could be to consider whether, without the putative contributor, the integrity of the work would essentially change. |

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| **NOTEs** |
| 1 | ***Simple tasks*** like implementing a basic algorithm in a programming language environment do not assign an authorship position. Followings examples are categorized in this note: * Performing a well-known experiment which already has been done in the team.
* Implementing a simple algorithms or functions like, converting polar coordinate to Cartesian, Reading data from file and sorting them.
* Preparing simple hardware and related issues like attaching an encoder to a motor, soldering, … .
* Proof reading for grammatical mistakes and typos.
* Helping with preparation of figures and graphics.

These kinds of participations can be appreciated at the Acknowledgment of the paper. |
| 2 | If a person ***leaves*** a project at a certain level, his/her progress should be evaluated within a meeting including all active members and replacement may happen at the same meeting. If the progress of leaving person is less than 30%, then his/her order in the paper will be replaced by the new person, if the progress is within 30% till 50% then the replacement will take over his/her order and the leaving person’s order will be after the new person. If the progress is more than 50% then the order is fixed and the new comer will have an order after him/her. |
| 3 | If a person ***couldn’t finish*** the assigned task by due date, the same rule as for the leaving person may be applied to him/her. |

**Reference**

[1] Sahu DR, Abraham P. Authorship: rules, rights, responsibilities and recommendations. J Postgrad Med [serial online] 2000 [cited 2010 Mar 17]; 46:205. Available from: <http://www.jpgmonline.com/text.asp?2000/46/3/205/276>

[2] The Chronicles: [Disputes over who should be the first author?](http://chronicle.com/forums/index.php/topic%2C57736.msg1190505.html#msg1190505)

[cited 2010 Mar 24]. Available from: <http://chronicle.com/forums/index.php?topic=57736.0>