

American University of Beirut

Faculty of Medicine

Guidelines on Authorship

Introduction

The publication and dissemination of scholarly scientific research is a fundamental academic responsibility. This draft attempts to guide scientists at the Faculty of Medicine to apply clear and fair standards in acknowledging the contribution to this activity.

Purpose

Research, whether basic or clinical is a fundamental component of the mission of the Faculty of Medicine in the American University of Beirut. Concurrent with this mission, is the ethical and truthful communication of new knowledge to the scientific community. Authors, as such, should adhere to standards in collegiality, integrity and honesty in the production of published research. While faculty should be free to collaborate with researchers intra- and extra-murally and publish the results of their scholarly work without coercion, it is anticipated that problems and disputes might arise during the course of any type of research.

Scholarly scientific publications defined as articles, abstracts, and presentations at professional meetings and grant applications are examples in which multiple medical and non-medical professionals may be involved. Such vehicles of communication must be published in sufficient details and accuracy in order to enhance achievement and repute.

It is the responsibility of the faculty of Medicine and its constituencies to help in fostering these principles and to provide a policy in which the salient requirements for authorship are defined.

Definitions

Research projects whether clinical or basic are conducted by:

- A member in a department of the Faculty of Medicine.
- Faculty members associated to a department at the Faculty of Medicine.
- Collaborators working with a faculty member in a department of the Faculty of Medicine either from within AUB or outside AUB.

Authorship

All listed authors on a manuscript should be contributors to the work. No guests and ghosts! Data for any kind of publication should not be communicated without getting authors' consent. An author is defined as an individual who meets the following criteria:

- Substantial involvement in the conception, design, execution, and/or analysis of data.
- Sufficient participation in drafting, reviewing, and/or revising the manuscript for its credible content
- Final approval of the version to be published.

Contributors

- Paid worker, whether a junior or a senior technician
- MS student
- PhD student
- Postdoctoral fellow
- Professorial rank PI
- Non-academic staff (e.g. technologists, research assistants)
- Medical students

Role of contributors

- Physical work
- Intellectual involvement
- Involvement in writing
- Various support mechanisms

The first author is the person that performs most of the bench work (research assistant, MS student, PhD student, fellow, post-doc, or assistant professor).

The first author is in general the person who had significant contribution in the different stages of the production of the article. He is selected by the PI or the lab director

The last (senior) author is the owner of the project, who wrote the proposal and received the funding (principal investigator).

In case the study is collaboration between two principal investigators or two laboratories, one party will be agreed upon for as first author while the other party will be the last authors. It is up to the principal investigator of the laboratory that gets to be first author to decide whether a

student/fellow/post-doc will be the first author. The principal investigator will then be last-but-one and co-corresponding with the last author from the other laboratory.

Intermediate and other authors will appear either alphabetically if they contributed equally (should be clearly indicated) or according to their respective contribution.

Authorship order and composition (authors) should be negotiated in principle, by senior members of the team, prior to the initiation of the work, with flexibility to add new contributors or to modify the respective positions according to additional experiments or work required, and before final acceptance. Research projects involving more than one senior PI should be clearly discussed and contributions well established. It is important to designate authorship well before submitting a manuscript.

Data storage and retention

Refer to University policy on data retention

Original data should be retained and safely held by the team leader or lab director or PI, for as long as readers of publications might reasonably expect to raise questions that require reference to it. This should be at least five years and in the case of clinical research, 15 years may be more appropriate. Where it is impossible or impractical to hold data, a written indication of the location of the data, or key information regarding its location (e.g. the way in which it is called up from a limited access database), must be kept.

Disputes over authorship

Although authorship issues and related matters must have been agreed upon in a transparent and professional manner during the ensuing phases of the research project, these agreements may be contested by the collaborators and may involve data interpretation and ownership, order of listing of authors, control and focus of the discussion, journal selection, and choice of corresponding and responsible author.

In case a dispute arises the following procedure for resolution is followed:

- The responsible author (Principle investigator or team leader) should have the upper hand in resolving the dispute with regard to all the above. This should be done in a collegial and logical manner.
- If the responsible author (Principle investigator or team leader) fails to settle the dispute in a satisfactory manner, the controversy should be presented to the department chair in writing and the manuscript will be placed on hold until a resolution is reached. The Department Chair then meets with the parties concerned and should submit his recommendation within 6 weeks from receiving the complaint. In instances where the chair of the department is a party to the dispute or where multiple authors from different departments are involved, then the dispute will be resolved by a referee who is appointed by the Dean or his/her designee who should submit a report within 6 weeks.
- In the event where both the chair or referee are unable to resolve the dispute, then the Dean shall appoint a committee composed of three senior faculty members who have no conflict of interest with the parties involved, to investigate the dispute. Their decision is then submitted within 60 days to the Dean who shall evaluate the recommendation and render a decision within two weeks. The Dean's verdict is final.