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IP Archives of Cytology and Histopathology Research

Journal homepage: <https://www.achr.co.in/>

Editorial

Ghost authorship Vs Gift authorship

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20-09-2022

Accepted 22-09-2022

Available online 23-09-2022

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Dear Researchers,

Authorship is defined as the one who an idea or who starts a plan or one who begins or create that means the principal investigator.^{1–3} For academic and research purposes, an authorship means the one who has made substantive intellectual contributions to the published study.⁴ Giving credit to someone who is not contributed or qualified as an author or not giving credit or remove / depriving a deserving authorship credit are grave ethical concern and serious issues.³

Authorship of manuscript suggested that the authors should be credited with creation of new knowledge, giving new solution or proving new insights in research which may add up to existing literature.³ Its beneficial for promotions in their respective fields and to earn credit points in performance appraisals or for various grants in research.³ It brings recognition from peer groups and experts in the respective field throughout the world.³

Professional misconduct or malpractices are there in the authorships also. Due to ‘Publish and Perish’ nature and competitive behavior, it is flourished now days.

Ghost Authorship

Ghost authorship is exactly opposite to the gift/guest or honorary authorships.⁵ Ghost authors of mainly 3 types. Ghost authors are defined as those one entailing a significant contribution to a manuscript without acknowledgement of that contribution.⁵ These authors can do all the data analysis, writing the manuscript but their names are not named or not disclosed in author list or in acknowledgment.³

First form of ghost authorship is suppression of the contribution of junior colleges, usually post graduates or junior researchers or postdoctoral fellow. They perform all the task like drafting the manuscript and carried the research, their name are missing from the authorship list.³

Second form is one wherein an individual not connected with the research study writes the first draft, works as authors personal editor and provides better quality manuscript and saves authors time.³

Third type of ghost authorship is most dangerous form. In this ‘professional medical writer’ (appointed by pharmaceutical company or device company/industry researcher) writes the draft which is approved by company but is not credited for this work.⁵

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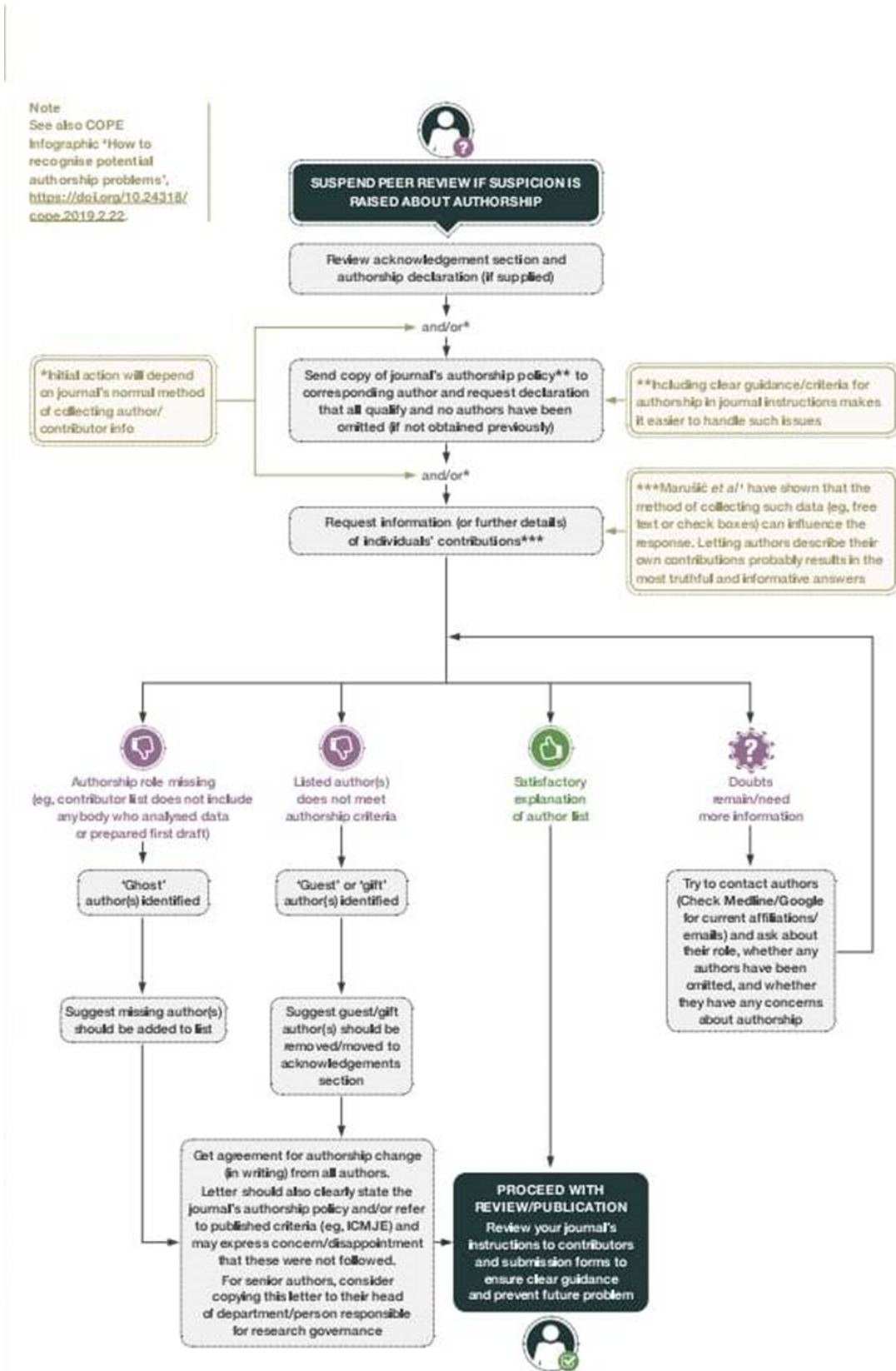


Chart 1: Flow chart of ghost, gift or guest authorship from COPE.^{6,7}

Gift or Honorary Authorship

Gift or guest or honorary authorship occurs when someone is credited as an author, taking acknowledgement for a research paper when, in fact, he/she hasn't really given any contribution for it whatsoever. Sadly, this is a very common type of unethical behavior, quite unacceptable in the eyes of most medical editors.⁴ Its mainly done by the authors to increase the chance of acceptance of the article to reputed journals by enhancing their prestige.^{3–6} The difference between guest authorship and honorary or gift authorship is marginal, such communication will include guest and gift authorship under honorary authorship by Bavdekar SB.³ Prevalence of guest/ honorary authorship is more than 50 % as per survey over the years.³ Most commonly it is gifted to lower academic rank colleagues or who has nil publications in few years, to the departmental head or who required it for promotions.³

Committee of publication ethics (COPE) and the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME) have published explicit statements against ghost authorship. Several of their recommended methods to combat both ghost and guest authorship are as follows:⁴

1. Journals should set clear authorship criteria.
2. Authors should disclose all contributors, regardless of author status, and their specific individual contributions and affiliations.
3. Authors should sign a formal declaration about their contributions.
4. Authors should complete a checklist if they received help from a medical writer.

The various methods and guidelines are adopted by medical journal to discourage the practice of ghost or guest authorships as per COPE, WAME and ICMJE. It is nicely explained by glow chart of COPE.^{6,7}

Advice to the authors –Kindly go through the “author guidelines” and follow it. Carefully read the “Instructions to

author”.

Conflict of Interest


None.

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Cite this article: Nikumbh DB. Ghost authorship Vs Gift authorship. *IP Arch Cytol Histopathology Res* 2022;7(3):149-151.