

# Editor-in-chief's voice

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## List of Authors is an Important Element in a Scientific Publication

Intensive development of science is thought to be the sign of the modern times. Printed press – newspapers, magazines and journals – flood on us with immense quantities of all sorts of publications as do their digital counterparts. Every day each discipline produces tens or even hundreds of new scientific reports. When we consider how many people have been considered as co-authors of those publications, we come to the unimaginable results.

The question arises whether the issue of co-authorship is really of critical importance and, if it is, why is that so? Well, editors of scientific publications and managers of (both bibliographic and bibliometric) databases of considerable size, increasingly frequently encounter the dubious phenomenon of the phony co-authorship. With this fact in context, the institutions of the state require that the scientific press introduce procedures or barriers to prevent the bogus or phony authorship from occurring. But what is really that bogus or phony authorship? The phenomenon may take a variety of forms. Quite often it is the so-called “honorary or guest authorship” for, say, a head of the scientific institute in which the work or publication was produced, although the person never co-fathered the work or publication. Next, the phony authorship is when the list of authors includes a person who did not produce any scientific contents in this work, and his or her role was limited to supplying scientific data to the project researchers. Further, more in a multi-center studies, a researcher who was contracted for a job by an enterprise conducting the research becomes a ‘co-author’ exclusively because of his or her supplied clinical data defined in the contract. The researchers who take part in the clinical trials, if they are to be named correctly, must be listed in a ‘Study Group’ as distinguished from the list of proper authors. Bogus co-authorship may also occur when a paper is prepared by an author whose name never occurs in the authors’ list, or when its position on the list is far from being representative for his or her participation on the development and final form of the paper (*ghostwriting*).

Due to all those considerations, our *Central European Journal of Urology* has introduced a procedure to define degree of involvement of particular co-authors in production of a scientific publication; each co-author’s tasks and roles are to be defined more precisely. This way our Journal will comply with the order from the institutions that supervise the fairness and correctness of producing the publications.

Who then could be considered the author of a scientific paper? The response to this question is extremely simple: the one whose scientific contribution to the publication has been material. The words ‘material scientific contribution to the publication’ may mean producing the scientific concept, also collecting relevant and important bibliographic information, writing the article, collecting, preparing and processing data including its statistical and critical analysis, or discussing the results. Also a person who reviewed the scientific contents of the work. Still the amount of work contributed to the publication must be considerable. Whenever the contribution occurred but was minute,

acknowledgments mention such a minor contributor outside the list of authors.

Sequence of authors’ names in the list of authors is of great importance too. The first place in the list goes to the person whose contribution in creating the work is paramount; that person is frequently the one who the author of the major parts of the manuscript, and often initiated or created the scientific project. The paramount positions can count two or even three. This occurs whenever more than one co-author’s scientific contributions can be considered major and equal. Their names, then, are to be clearly marked as those whose ‘contributions to the work is equal’, and their names are listed in alphabetical order. The last name in the list of authors is not the least one, and is of considerable importance: the closing name of authors lists usually belongs to the leader or manager of the research team preparing the publication. Often that person fathers the idea of the project and the publication. Also the final editing, amendments and modifications to the manuscript are his or her contribution. Due to those considerations, the author to whom any letters are to be written with reference to the publications are the people whose names are either the first or the last on the list, although exceptions from this rule are accepted. The remaining authors’ names are positioned according to their proportional contribution to the work, or, alternatively, in alphabetical order, should that contribution be comparable or similar.

Should there be limits to the length of the authors’ list? Some scientific journals do impose such restrictions. As the Editor of *Central European Journal of Urology* I see no requirement for such limits, as I represent the view that all major contributors to the work should be named. However, there are some unwritten laws, like the one applying to short articles: the list of authors should also be brief there. Reading a long list of authors, the readers seldom fail to reflect that the perceived contribution of each one from the list would be minute. Such restrictions, then, apply in particular to the Case Reports, short news on development in science called the *Short Communications* (where the number of authors’ names should be limited to three or four) but also to the Editorial Comments, or to the Letters to the Editor, which are usually written by one or two authors.

I wholeheartedly encourage our Dear Authors to observe the rules of co-authorship in scientific publications I considered worth reminding, as complying to those rules will definitely increase the status and prestige of the scientific journal. Thus, the regard of, and respect to the authors publishing there will increase and profit. A well-tempered list of authors eases and smoothes the professional contacts, as, in a way, it is written with the regard to, and apparent knowledge of, the hierarchical code, and reveals traces of each author’s input in the work.



**Tomasz Drewa,**  
*Editor-in-chief*