

Review of: "Honorary Authorship in Biomedical Journals: The Endless Story"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Although the submitted editorial offers a good overview of honorary authorship, it remains some insufficient in its description.

The author should present a clear definition of the term *honorary authorship* that distinguishes it from gift authorship and any other type of authorship, including guest and ghost authorship. I am not sure whether the author considers gift authorship to be synonymous, subordinate to, or even related to honorary authorship. The author has also described ghost authorship as being opposite to the concept of honorary authorship; however, the context in which the described opposition is suggested is somewhat vague, and it remains unclear why the author made the distinction only to be leave it ambiguous. The author could position ghost authorship as a subordinate concept to honorary authorship. In any case, I advise the author to thoroughly present the concept of problematic authorship at the beginning of the manuscript and explain why honorary authorship is being discussed instead of other types of problematic authorship. To be sure, Harvey (2018)^[1] has distinguished three related concepts: gift authorship, honorary authorship, and guest authorship. Do the author's definitions of those concepts differ at all from Harvey's? Last, I suppose that ghost authorship is far more problematic than other types of authorship, because it creates distinct victims and leaves them vulnerable to established researchers. If the author wants to also describe ghost authorship in detail, then the title of the manuscript should use a broader term than simply "honorary authorship."

The author has stated that Reference [9] reports that publications with more than five authors tended to include honorary authorship. However, I could not find such a description in the source. Unless I am mistaken, then the author should modify what they claim the source states or reconcile the discrepancy in another way.

In the conclusion, the author advises editors of biomedical journals to scrutinize cases in which authors have published an abnormally large number of papers and whose H index has skyrocketed. Would it identify young honorary or gift authors with relatively few publications who wish to expand their authorship as a means to secure or retain jobs? Because the author has listed multiple patterns of honorary authorship, I recommend describing measures for each pattern. It should also be recognized that the method reveals mere clues, not facts. Editors of journals should manually identify true pseudo-authors among the many authors with numerous publications extracted by the method. It's not an easy task. As the author explains, individuals who achieve authorship unfairly also bear the risk of being authors. Instead of making editors, who are not responsible for authorship decisions under the Vancouver Protocol, exert more effort in identifying unfair authorship than necessary, the method of measuring authors' contributions to publications by merely dividing by number

of authors should be amended, if such a method is in fact used.

References

1. [^]Harvey, L. Gift, honorary or guest authorship. *Spinal Cord* 56, 91 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41393-017-0057-8>