

## **Collaborative Manuscript Development Guidelines**

Introduction: Our institution is pleased with its successes in academic scholarship, including obtaining extramural awards (e.g., HRSA funding, Predoctoral Training, Faculty Development, AHEC) to conduct innovative projects in medical education as well as internally supported projects. Interdisciplinary collaborative activities to disseminate information about these successes, including abstract submissions for national meetings and manuscript development coming from these activities, are both exciting and challenging. The following guidelines outline a process for manuscript and abstract development intended to promote the collaborative process.

Institutional History: With faculty turnover and project maturation, it is often easy to lose track of the sources leading to the development of grant ideas and expansions. Keeping track of literature published by faculty colleagues and previously developed projects (funded or unfunded), as well as those underway, can assist with this. Faculty in the Office of Medical Education (David Nierenberg, Susan Harper, Eric Shirley) are happy to assist with institutional history whenever needed to provide background information.

### Overview of Process:

- Step one: Develop initial idea for a paper/abstract involving project specific information and identify supporting data sources;
- Step two: Develop a brief abstract and tables to be presented to a Principal Investigator (PI) or program director for approval (done to avoid overlap of duplicative manuscript/ abstract development). This should include a list of the lead author and all proposed contributing authors;
- Step three: Refine abstract/tables based on comments from PI, program director and/or other consultants (e.g. Medical Education Committee or Evaluation Working Group) and develop paper outline. Communicate these to all contributing authors.
- Step four: Identify appropriate journal for submission.
- Step five: Once approval to move forward obtained by all authors, develop a manuscript development timeline, that includes suggested meeting points, if necessary.

If deadlines are not consistently met and work is not progressing, the PI, program director or lead author may request changes in membership of the contributing author list. The initial timetable and requests for reasonable extensions of the deadlines must be considered prior to any authorship change.

Specifics on Methods and Writing: For each collaborative manuscript in development, there is a lead author, a group of contributing authors, and a group of people who assisted in some way and deserve acknowledgement. The following guidelines are suggested to assist in delineating the responsibilities of each of these individuals/groups.

- Lead Author - The lead author should take responsibility for every activity in the process of abstract and methods development, writing, coordination of editing and submission/ revising of the manuscript for publication.

These activities include:

1. Shepherding the abstract through the approval process. The abstract should be agreed upon by the lead author and writing group prior to submission.
2. Clearly identifying the objectives for each manuscript development activity and communicating these effectively to all contributing authors (i.e. conceptual or analytic development to final editing);

3. Monitoring the status of all suggested revisions and effectively communicating the rationale for any revisions not made to the manuscript to the appropriate co-author(s) prior to subsequent related reviews.
  4. Monitoring **all** areas of controversy that exist among authors, **all** subsequent decisions made regarding these controversies, and discussing/disseminating decisions to all authors.
  5. Identifying an appropriate mechanism for sharing drafts and using it consistently (i.e. fax, express mail, FTP site);
  6. Provide reasonable deadlines for each review / revision and promote an understanding among collaborators that these will be adhered to unless scheduling issues are discussed with lead author prior to a review deadline.
  7. Determine authorship order based on the relative contributions of each co-author.
- Contributing Author Group - With facilitation by the lead author, the contributing author group should develop a clear outline of the specific activities involved in the development of an aim, an analytic file or data definitions and analyses (*a priori*) to be undertaken for manuscript development.

These steps include:

1. Outlining the manuscript in its entirety with specific highlights of the unique contributions the work makes to the literature.
  2. Clear delineation of the methods, definitions, relevant coding and analyses used to construct results (in either table or text format) prior to generating final tables.
  3. Delineating roles and responsibilities of each co-author (at a face-to-face meeting or by e-mail) in the development, editing or revising of the manuscript, including following the agreed upon timetable.
  4. Conducting a rigorous review of data tables generated using planned methods, definitions, relevant coding and analyses as defined above and revising approach as necessary.
  5. Taking responsibility for the accuracy and content of the manuscript in its entirety.
  6. Responding to recommended revisions as they occur after peer review.
- Authorship and Acknowledgements - Many people contribute to manuscript development in different ways. Authorship credit should be based on ALL THREE of the following as outlined by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (1):
    - 1) substantial contributions to conception, design, or acquisition of data or analysis and interpretation of data, such as providing statistical expertise, obtaining funding, providing administrative, technical or material support, or supervision;
    - 2) drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and
    - 3) final approval of the version to be published.

Acquisition of funding, the collection of data or general supervision of the research group by themselves do not justify authorship and should be acknowledged.

Using JAMA Authorship Responsibility, Criteria and Contributions, the following must hold for any submission:

- the manuscript represents valid work and that neither this manuscript nor one with substantially similar content under similar authorship has been published or is being considered for publication elsewhere;
- if requested by the editors, authors will provide data or will cooperate fully in obtaining and providing data on which the manuscript is based for examination by the editors or their assignees; and

- for papers with more than one author, the corresponding author (lead) is to serve as the primary correspondent with the editorial office, to review the edited typescript and proof, and to make decisions regarding the release of information in the manuscript to the media, federal agencies, or both.

**Citations**

1. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. Updated May 2000 (<http://www.icmje.org>).