



Editorial

Author review in publishing science

Science has often progressed when collaborations are invoked, and these are to be further encouraged. When such collaborations bear fruit, usually in the form of abstracts for scientific meetings and then formal manuscripts submitted for publication in scientific journals, several authors names may appear. This is normal and expected, for it signifies that a successful collaboration has occurred.

The use of someone's name, and by inference, their reputation, as a coauthor suggests their having contributed creatively to the work being described. It also suggests that they have approved of having their name on the final abstract, publication or presentation. Having someone's name present as a coauthor also suggests that they have had a chance to read, comment, and approve of the final manuscript or abstract being submitted. How else could one's name be included as a coauthor without giving such individuals the opportunity of reviewing the manuscript draft before it is submitted for publication?

The practice of submitting a manuscript with colleagues' names as coauthors, without providing such individuals the opportunity to read and comment on said manuscript is unacceptable, unprofessional and unethical. This practice may indeed be illegal, since one cannot legally use another's name and reputation without their permission. Possible reasons for not informing colleagues that their names will appear on a manuscript being submitted for publication might include time constraints, oversights, extreme busyness, or some other inability to distribute drafts before they are submitted for publication or presentation.

The practice of not letting all authors review a manuscript certainly conveys some legal responsibility to the corresponding

author, to say nothing of the Journal that publishes a manuscript without assuring that all authors have approved of having their names on said manuscript. It behooves us all, as practicing scientists to simply ensure that all of our coauthors, once we have agreed whose names are to appear as coauthors, have the ability to review any manuscript on which their names are to appear in print. If any of these coauthors do not approve of having their names appear, then they must surely have the right to have their names removed, before the manuscript is submitted for publication. This is common and professional courtesy and must be followed, in all instances.

Any Journal that does not have as a standard policy the requirement of a separate form submitted with all new manuscripts, wherein all coauthors indicate they approve of the manuscript, is not free of responsibility and may be guilty of unintentional complicity. If such a signed agreement is not in place at the time of submittal, then the manuscript should not be reviewed any further. Perhaps it is time for this and other Analytical Chemistry oriented journals to consider implementing such a policy, which appears to be somewhat common in other fields of scientific publication.

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