

# Editorial

## Authors or collaborators?

The *Journal of Orthodontics* has made great progress over the last few years. We are currently publishing more clinically based randomized trials, systematic reviews, and other clinically based research. We have also adopted CONSORT guidelines for the reporting of trials and we are becoming more critical of 'convenience' studies. As a result, I feel that this journal is catching up with some of the high quality medical journals.

We are, however, lagging behind in other areas, such as the important issue of authorship and whose names should be included as authors on a paper. Most academic and NHS authors are under pressure to publish, and most of us have felt that we are in a 'paper chase' so that we can publish as many papers as possible for CV building, promotion, or other forms of recognition. This has, arguably, resulted in the publication of papers that seem to have an ever-increasing number of authors. The alternative viewpoint is that, as studies become more complex and ambitious, then more people are involved in the study.

This leads to confusion. For example, should everyone who collects data in a study be a co-author? Who 'owns' the study? Importantly, if an accusation of academic fraud, plagiarism or other malpractice is made, who is ultimately responsible? I have looked for guidance on these matters and this has been clarified by the International Committee of Journal Medical Editors ([www.ICJME.org](http://www.ICJME.org)). *These state clearly that authorship credit should be based only on:*

- 1 *Substantial contributions to the conception and design, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data.*
- 2 *Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content.*
- 3 *Final approval of the version to be published.*

*Conditions 1, 2, and 3 must all be met. Acquisition of funding, the collection of data, or general supervision of the research group, by themselves, does not justify authorship.*

Importantly, the recommendations also state that one or more authors should take responsibility for the integrity of the work as a whole, from inception to published article. Finally, the ICMJE recommends that authors provide a description of what each contributed, that all others who contributed to the work but who are not authors be named in the acknowledgment, with a description of what they did, and that editors publish these contributions.

We intend to accept these recommendations and follow other Journals, such as, the *British Medical Journal*, *The Lancet* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. We will list contributors to a paper in two ways. First, we will publish a list of authors' names at the beginning of the paper and, secondly, we list contributors (some of whom may not be included as authors) at the end of the paper, giving details of who did what for the study. One or more of these contributors will be listed as guarantors of the paper. These people must provide us with a written statement, that he or she accepts full responsibility for the conduct of the study, had access to the data and controlled the decision to publish.

I will be introducing this change to *Journal* to take effect from the first edition of 2004 and we have amended the instructions to authors accordingly.

Kevin O'Brien

