

Editorial:**Who should be the corresponding author ?**

During my tenure as senior resident in a medical institute, I co-authored few publications where the head of the department was the corresponding author in addition to being the first author. The corresponding author (whose contact address is printed within that article) is naturally the most visible author. I used to have the opinion that to become corresponding author, one should be either the first author or the senior faculty in the department where the work was done. The corresponding author takes primary responsibility for communications with the journal during the manuscript submission, peer review and publication process and typically assures that all the journal's administrative requirements such as providing details of authorship, ethics committee, clinical trial registration, documentation and gathering conflict of interests forms and statements are properly filled. The corresponding author bears overall responsibility and represents the team of authors in a published article. The corresponding author should always be available throughout the submission and peer review process to respond to editorial queries in a timely way and should be available after publication to respond to critiques of the work and co-operate with any requests from the journal for data or additional information should questions about the paper arise after publication.¹ The corresponding author handles the task of manuscript corrections, proof reading, correspondence during the paper submission, handling the revision and resubmission of revised manuscripts up to the acceptance of the manuscript. The corresponding author is the primary point of contact for the manuscript, corresponds with the journal editor during submission process, collection, verifies conflict of interest details from all authors and sometimes signs the declaration forms on their behalf. The corresponding author is required to provide information on the specific communications each author has made to the manuscript.²

There is no universally known or accepted criteria for determining authorship and deciding the order of authorship in scientific papers and authorship disputes are common. There is no specific way to determine the exact contribution of each author for their position. The first author is usually the person who contributed most to the work including conceiving the hypothesis writing of the manuscript and had taken main responsibility for doing the research practically along with the co-authors who might assist him/her in the research work.⁶ The co-authors mentioned in the middle get less credit than the first and last authors.^{2,3,6}

As per International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE),¹ the authorship credit should be based only on substantial contribution to conceptional design or acquisition of data or analyzing and interpretation of data, drafting of article or reviewing it critically for important intellectual content, final approval of the version to be completed, and agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved. *All* the authors should attempt to fulfill *all* these criteria.

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When first author was also the corresponding author, he was credited with analysis and interpretation of data and with drafting of the manuscript and most respondents felt that the first author was also involved in the process of study conception and design (82%) and acquisition of data (95%). Most respondents felt that authorship order should be determined by the amount of work done (95%) and the contribution to writing the manuscript (91%). But when last author was labeled as the corresponding author, he was more often credited for study conception and design for administrative support and for supervision.² Another study determining the position of the corresponding author showed that the corresponding author is most likely to appear first and then last in the byline.³

When I looked at some of the recently published papers, I had the feeling that even the corresponding authorship can be a gift. I was surprised to see the corresponding author being identified by his e-mail address only in a original article published recently and except for institutional affiliations none of the authors had any departmental affiliations.⁷ I cannot imagine an original article being published with only e-mail of the corresponding author for any communication. In some published articles,⁸⁻¹⁰ there have been instances of the corresponding author seeming inappropriate considering the theme of the study, the study subjects and the department where the study had been conducted. It is very difficult to understand how an individual of other department can fulfill the requirements of a corresponding author. Can we say that inappropriate corresponding authorship exists and warrant strict guidelines to choose corresponding author for publishing the scientific work.

K. Gowrinath

*Department of Pulmonary Medicine,
Apollo Speciality Hospital , Nellore
e-mail: drkgowrinath@gmail.com*

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