



Who Should Be the Corresponding Author, What Are Their Responsibilities, and What Email Address Should They Provide?

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The essential and major goal for scientific researchers has been, and will be, to publish original articles to provide new scientific information. After successful completion of rigorous research, dissemination in a timely manner of their novel findings for the benefit of other scientists and the broader research community should be the next goal.

This communication clarifies the proposed authorship and responsibility of the authors. The first author is typically the investigator who has “championed” the research. This person typically is the designer of the study protocol and the investigator who was responsible for the promulgation of the research. The first author is typically credited with the research although it is understood that all the authors participated. The last author is typically the “senior” author, often the lab director for a basic science study or the most experienced clinician in a clinical trial, particularly if that person has been the financial supporter for the study. The co-authors, which have increased in recent years with growing emphasis on global and multidisciplinary collaboration,

must qualify for authorship based on the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors requirements.

One author is designated the “corresponding” author. The corresponding author, i.e., the author with whom the Editor communicates, is responsible for the integrity of the manuscript contents such as the veracity of the results, the lack of plagiarism, the contribution of each author, and other issues related to production of the manuscript. To analogize to creating a motion picture, the corresponding author is akin to the producer who not only supports financially the film but assures adequate locations to film, paying the actors, and other functions. The film director may be considered akin to the first author.

To summarize, some of the roles of the corresponding author are the following:

1. Article preparation, submission, and acceptance [1, 2]:
2. Pre-publication: submission of the manuscript, communication with the editor, coordination of revisions, signing the copyright owner agreement and the publishing agreement, paying the article processing charge/publication fee (if needed), and final proofing of the manuscript.
3. Integrity: responsibility for ensuring integrity of both the published data and authorship contributions. In addition, the corresponding author is responsible for meeting the journal administrative requirements, documentation of ethics committee approval, documentation of clinical trial registration, complete disclosure of conflict-of-interest statement, etc.
4. Post-publication: responsibility for providing timely responses to queries related to the manuscript, including individual approaches, letters to the editor, and requests for data sharing.
5. Peer review: the authors could be invited to provide peer reviews of manuscripts focused on similar research topics.

Based on the expectations of the corresponding author, it seems intuitive that the corresponding should for the most

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part be the first author or the last author. That is not always the case as described below.

While the first two roles are accepted by most publishers, the third and fourth roles (c and d) are not mentioned by all. For example, Springer, the publisher of this journal, does not specify the third and fourth roles. The publisher states that articles can be published with *more* than one corresponding author, but only one can be accommodated by the Peer Review System. Moreover, they specify: “The corresponding author does not need to be the first author or a senior author. The order of authors can be arranged during the submission process, in whichever order suits but submissions must be made by the corresponding author and not on behalf of the corresponding author” (<https://support.springer.com/en/support/solutions/articles/6000214118-corresponding-author-defined>).

While in the past, hard copies of submitted manuscripts were mailed to the journals, the corresponding author was almost always the senior (usually the last) author. As such, the funding agencies or research institutions typically regarded the corresponding author as the essential scientist for each article. However, virtually universal transition to electronic submissions mandates that the official corresponding author is required to submit revisions, respond to editor queries, and proof the final manuscript. As this can be onerous based on individual website applications, many senior authors prefer not to be actively involved in this process, so they defer this role to more junior authors (usually the first author) as the corresponding author. While this perfectly serves the short-term role, while also benefiting professional development of junior researchers, it may create difficulties in fulfilling the longer-term responsibilities of the role. Due to various reasons, including fixed-term contracts, career progression, and family commitments, many junior faculty researchers and trainees move on to new employment, and thus, their email addresses are no longer active for communication. Teunis et al. assessed the response rate of the corresponding authors for manuscripts published between May 2003 and May 2013. In the study published in 2015, they found that there was a 20% (89/446) rate of undeliverable emails [2]. Only 53% (190/357) of the corresponding authors with working email addresses responded to query requests [2]. The odds of replying decreased by 15% per year between the publication and the query.

However, this can be easily resolved by listing the email addresses of *all* co-authors, including the senior and named

corresponding authors. For this reason, cardiovascular drugs and therapy have implemented the *requirement* to include the email addresses of all co-authors in submissions to our journal.

Another important issue is the specific email address provided by the corresponding authors. Many academic institutions and hospitals have implemented heightened Internet security measures. This results in filtering and eliminating many emails sent to such email addresses, meaning that they are often not received by the corresponding author. In addition, some authors, especially more junior contributors, may be employed on fixed-term contracts or training programs, so are likely to change their place of work overtime, so their originally specified email address is no longer active. Use of personal email addresses or professional email addresses that can be accessed independent of the employing institution can resolve these issues. Ideally, each author should use a unique email address that can be linked to their personal ORCID identifier number (www.ORCID.ORG) alone or in addition to the institutional email address. Therefore, this journal will encourage the corresponding author to use an email address that will be available for a prolonged period typical 1–2 years at minimum.

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Declarations

Competing Interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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