LETTERS

Collaboration and Authorship of High-Impact Randomized Clinical Trials

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KEY WORDS: conflict of interest; industry funding; industry collaboration; guest authorship; honorary authorship; primary guest authorship.

J Gen Intern Med 31(1):11

DOI: 10.1007/s11606-015-3401-8

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To the Editors:

We read with interest Roper and Korenstein's article entitled *Industry Collaboration and Primary Guest Authorship of High-Impact Randomized Clinical Trials: A Cross-Sectional Study*,¹ which appears to show a decrease in the prevalence of guest authorship compared with previous studies. As leaders of the Global Alliance of Publication Professionals – GAPP (www.gappteam.org), we have been, and continue to be, strong and vocal critics of inappropriate authorship. However, we are wary about how comparable this study is with the others cited by the authors.^{2–4}

Roper and Korenstein open their article by defining guest authorship as “attribution of research article authorship to investigators not meeting standard authorship criteria,” yet fail to use standard authorship criteria in their study. They also suggest their guest authorship criteria are conservative and may underestimate the true prevalence of guest authorship. We disagree, as Roper and Korenstein focus only on the first part of the second International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) criterion.⁵ By limiting their definition of authorship to “drafting the work” and ignoring “or revising it critically for important intellectual content”, they lower the bar to guest author status and inflate prevalence estimates over apparently similar studies. We also disagree that the initial writing of the manuscript is “generally” viewed as the responsibility of the primary author(s).⁶ There is no such guidance in the ICMJE criteria, though we acknowledge that there are a few journals that specify this in their individual instructions for authors. The ICMJE authorship criteria are viewed by many as flawed, but they are widely accepted by journals and publish-

ers. It would be helpful they were applied consistently in studies such as these.

In the interests of full disclosure, all members of GAPP have provided or do provide ethical medical writing services to academic, biotechnology, or pharmaceutical clients, and all authors are active in national and international not-for-profit associations that encourage ethical medical writing practices.

Jackie Marchington, PhD, CMPP, Director of Operations, Caudex, UK, on behalf of the Global Alliance of Publication Professionals (www.gappteam.org).

Conflict of Interest: All authors declare that: 1) we have provided or do provide ethical medical writing services to academic, biotechnology, or pharmaceutical clients, 2) our spouses, partners, or children have no financial relationships that may be relevant to the submitted work; and 3) we are all active in national and international not-for-profit associations that encourage ethical medical writing practices. No external sponsors were involved in the preparation of this letter, and no external funding was used.

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