

8. WHO SHOULD BE THE AUTHOR(S) OF A CASE REPORT?

8.1. Authorship

Since case reports generally do not involve large research teams and investigators, authorship will be relatively straightforward.

Most often (but not always) the person who writes up a case report is a clinician who has been directly involved in case management. However, beyond involvement in case management, report writing entails carrying out a literature search to place the case in the larger context, thinking logically, writing clearly, determining the strengths and limitations of your observations, and deciding on the main message of the report. As such, several people may be involved in this process.

Remember that authorship carries credit, but also responsibility and accountability for the content of the published report.

The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (<http://www.mcmje.org>) recommends that authorship on all types of medical publications be based on the following four criteria:

1. *Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work, or the acquisition, analysis or interpretation of data for the work; AND*
2. *Drafting of the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content; AND*
3. *Final approval of the version to be published; AND*
4. *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.*

In other words, anyone who is author on a published case report should meet all four above criteria.

For other persons who have contributed to the article but do not meet all these criteria, they should be acknowledged in the "Acknowledgments" section. Examples of roles which must be acknowledged but do not meet authorship include:

- A person who gave advice on case management without being directly involved

- A person who critically appraised the manuscript before submission for publication
- A person who carried out a search of the literature to contextualize the report
- A person who provided medical writing services
- A person who copy-edited the manuscript

If there is more than one author on the report, the order of authors should reflect the importance of contribution. The first author is supposed to be the person who took the lead on the report: this is always true, no matter how many authors. When there are more than two authors, then the last author is generally considered to be the more senior person on the project, i.e. who provided guidance during the reporting and drafting.

Never include a co-author or the name of a colleague in the Acknowledgments Section without his/her prior approval.

8.2. Corresponding author

If there is more than one author on the report, you will need to have a corresponding author. The corresponding author is most often (but not always) the first author. The International Committee of Medical Journals Editors specifies:

The corresponding author is the one individual who takes primary responsibility for communication with the journal during the manuscript submission, peer review, and publication process, and typically ensures that all the journal's administrative requirements, such as providing details of authorship, ethics committee approval [etc.] are properly completed. The corresponding author should 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 correspond with any requests from the journal for data of additional information should questions about the paper arise after publication.

Note that when the author's name has been removed for security or confidentiality purposes, you will need to have a corresponding author who could be a person from your organization or university who provides editorial support.

Medical journals are increasingly asking that a "guarantor" be designated for the manuscript, that is a person who can vouch for its scientific integrity. This is usually but not always the first author. It might also be the last author, e.g. a more senior colleague who supervised your work.