

## **Authorship Policy**



**National Public Health Institute of Liberia**

**~ Preventing and Controlling Public Health Threats~**

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## FORWARD

It is clear that misconduct, in all its forms, undermines public confidence in science and ultimately destroys the whole scientific community. We believe that high-quality science and scientific integrity go hand in hand. To uphold this culture, we have decided to develop the first publication on research authorship. This authorship policy aims at preventing misconduct and fostering the highest standards in conducting scientific, medical, and public health research.

Also, this policy document seeks to assign both credit and responsibility for intellectual work to an individual (s) based on their contributions and to eliminate perceptions of conflict of interest in the presentation/publishing of scholarly and scientific findings.

In view of the above-mentioned, contributors in scholarly/scientific works are expected to engage early in the publication development process in clear terms about the assignment of authorship roles with their potential publishing colleagues. In all cases, written agreements detailing authorship roles and contributions are a best practice.

Therefore, all partners, institutions, and collaborators wanting to conduct research with NPHIL should meet the requirements outlined in this document.

I want to seize this opportunity to extend my deepest and profound gratitude to members of the research committee, and all participants for their brilliant work in developing this document.

It is my ardent hope that this document can serve its best purpose.

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**Hon. Jane A. Macauley**  
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## INTRODUCTION

Determining authorship is a very critical aspect of maintaining the integrity of the scholarly and scientific works. It is an unambiguous way of assigning responsibility and giving credit for intellectual work. Authorship credit should only be given to those who have contributed and participated in the scholarly and scientific work. Fair and impartial determination of authorship is vital to funding support, academic promotion and the reputation of the individual authors and their respective institutions.

As early as possible in a research or scholarly collaboration, collaborators should clearly outline requirements for authorship of any manuscript that will emanate from the results of joint work. Principles guiding authorship decisions should be discussed without ambiguity and with reference to relevant guiding documents. It is important to state that this is not just about deciding who will / will not be an author. Instead, these discussions should be held openly and frequently on collaborative projects to prevent misunderstandings and misrepresentations. Agreements should be reached early in the manuscript development process, and these agreements should be reviewed and revised as often as may be required to reflect changes in the actual contributions of each potential author.

Many times during collaborations, disagreements may arise regarding who should be named as an author or contributor to a scholarly or scientific work and the order in which individuals should be listed. Some of these disputes are a result of failed communication and expectation setting. These Guidelines are meant to serve as a set of standards that are shared by the academic community as a whole, to help facilitate open communication through adherence to acceptable principles. These principles apply to all intellectual products, whether published or prepared for internal use or for broad dissemination.

## PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy is generally purposed at assigning both credit and responsibility for intellectual work to an individual (s) based on their contributions and to eliminate perceptions of conflict of interest in the presentation of scholarly and scientific findings.

In view of the aforementioned, participants in scholarly/scientific works are expected to engage early in the publication development process in open and clear communication about the

assignment of authorship roles with their potential publishing colleagues. In all cases, written agreements detailing authorship roles and contributions are a best practice.

## APPLICABILITY OF THE POLICY

1. This policy applies to all individuals within, or collaborating with the National Public Health Institute of Liberia engaged in the publication of research, defined broadly as all forms of scientific investigation or creative work, regardless of funding source.
2. The term "publication" as used in this policy is meant generically, representing as inclusively as possible any manner of report, paper, manuscript, article, book, chapter, or other publishable product whether printed or digital in format.

## ASSIGNMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Typically, there are three conditions that qualify a researcher to be eligible for authorship:

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

Any researcher that meets the first and second conditions must be given the opportunity to approve the version to be published and must have the opportunity to be included as an author.

It is also expected that each author has been given the opportunity to participate in the drafting of the manuscript (or substantive revision of its content) and approves the final version of the manuscript to be published.

**Provision of logistical, financial, or administrative support alone does not constitute a valid basis for authorship. Recognition of these types of contribution is appropriate for an acknowledgements section of a publication.**

## AUTHORSHIP ROLES

For publications involving multiple authors, there is always a “lead” or “corresponding” author identified. Collaborators on a publication are to agree as early in the planning process to identify one author as corresponding. The remaining authors are then designated as participating/co-authors. Corresponding authorship is intended as an administrative role and doesn't necessarily imply greater individual contribution to the publication. In disciplines where authorship practices are typically more consensus based, collaborators are encouraged to proactively discuss responsibility for administrative matters relating to publication submittal.

1. ***Corresponding author*** - Depending on the discipline and the nature of the collaborative work, the corresponding author does not need to be the first, last, or most senior author, nor necessarily the principal investigator or project leader. At the onset of the study, all authors should discuss the outline of the work and tentative order of authorship should be established with the logic governing this order made explicit. As projects proceed, agreements regarding authorship may be updated. . The corresponding author is responsible for the integrity of the work as a whole, and ensuring that reasonable care and effort has been taken to determine that all the data are complete, accurate, reasonably interpreted, and accessible to others within the norms of the discipline and requirements of the publishing venue. It is the responsibility of the corresponding author to assure that the contributions of all participating authors are properly recognized. In cases where a corresponding author has been formally assigned, this individual assumes overall responsibility for the publication and typically serves as the managerial and corresponding author.

In consensus situations, all authors jointly share responsibility. The corresponding author (or consensus authors) is (are) responsible for confirming that all participating authors meet this policy's authorship criteria, for providing the manuscript's final draft to each participating author for review and approval, and for following any journal-specific requirements governing author review and consent (such as signature forms).

2. ***Co - author*** – Every author other than the lead/corresponding author is referred to as the co-author. Each co-author of a publication, regardless of relative seniority or level of contribution, is responsible for providing confirmation of authorship in accordance with this policy's criteria and the requirements of the selected publication destination. Each co-author is responsible for the content of those sections of the manuscript ascribed to them, including the integrity of any

applicable research. He/she shall verify, review and approve the final manuscript to be published. It is instructive that an individual offered authorship of a publication for which they do not satisfy the criteria for authorship as set forth in this policy shall decline authorship in accordance with this policy.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLOSURES

1. "Acknowledgements" are intended to communicate to grant agencies, promotion committees, scholarly readers, and others the specific contributions that are insufficient under this policy to justify authorship. Such contributions include general supervision of a research group, assistance in obtaining funding, technical support, and assistance in writing and editing the manuscript. Individuals/institutions who may have contributed to a project or participated in the development of a publication of such project but who do not meet the criteria for authorship, such as editorial assistants, illustrators, medical writers, or other individuals, provide a valuable contribution to the writing and editing of publications. Since those contributions do not meet the criteria for authorship under this policy, these individuals/institutions should be listed in an acknowledgements section of the published work.

**All individuals and institutions that have received approval or support from the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) for the conduct of a research work shall acknowledge NPHIL.**

2. All authors, in their manuscripts submitted for review and publication, must disclose the source(s) of support (financial and/or tangible resources) for the work unless otherwise instructed by the journal or publication. Examples of support include but are not limited to:
  - Research and educational grants
  - Contracts
  - Corporate sponsorships
  - Gifts, etc.

Authors shall fully disclose all relevant financial interests that could be viewed as a potential conflict of interest in accordance with local and international research policies and regulations.

3. Since it is possible that readers may infer endorsement of the data and conclusions from an acknowledgement, those acknowledged should give written permission and a disclaimer shall be



included specifically indicating that inclusion in the acknowledgements does not imply endorsement by those named.

## VIOLATIONS

1. Intentional exclusion of a person as author who meets the criteria defined above in this policy.
2. Assignment of an honorary authorship - Honorary (guest, courtesy, or prestige) authorship here is defined as authorship granted out of appreciation or respect for an individual, or with the belief that the expert standing of the honored person will increase the likelihood of publication, credibility, or status of the work.
3. Assignment of gift authorship - Gift authorship is defined as credit, offered based on a sense of obligation, tribute, or dependence, in anticipation of benefits, to an individual who has not appropriately contributed to the work.
4. Assignment of ghost authorship - Ghost authorship is defined as the failure to identify as an author someone who made substantial contributions to the research or writing of a manuscript thus meriting authorship or allowing significant editorial control of a publication by an unnamed party, which may constitute a real or perceived conflict of interest that should be disclosed.

## DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In the case of a possible violation of the authorship rights of an individual, said individual may report the perceived violations to the institutional scientific research integrity committee for mediation of the issue. In the event that improper authorship practices are identified, appropriate corrective measures will be determined and effected by the scientific research integrity committee in accordance with the **Scientific Integrity in the Conduct of Research Policy**. During dispute resolution the involved authors are expected to refrain from actions that may damage the authorship interests and rights of the other participating authors.

## REFERENCES

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