

# Editorial

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF AUTHORS

Authors, and reviewers, are the bedrock of journals. Each has specific responsibilities. There are four recommended criteria of authorship.<sup>[1]</sup> An author should have made considerable contributions in terms of: design/conception of the work, or in the collection, analysis/interpretation of the data; provided considerable input in terms of drafting of the work, or critically reviewing the content; approval of the final version submitted for publication; being accountable for the entire process of the work including addressing questions that pertain to any part of the work.<sup>[1]</sup> All co-authors must meet the above criteria. They must all provide input to address peer reviewers' comments or questions. If co-authors do not meet these criteria they are not listed as authors: they should be acknowledged.<sup>[1]</sup> Literature recommends a percentage-based index to measure author contribution to scientific articles.<sup>[2]</sup>

All authors should be transparent as to whether they used artificial intelligence (AI) technology in the production of the work<sup>[1]</sup>; they should describe how they used AI in relevant sections of the work. It is the responsibility of authors to adhere to a journal's AI policy. In other words if AI tools were used by authors they should acknowledge this in the appropriate section of the manuscript. For example, if AI had been used for improvement of language and readability then this must be described in the acknowledgement section.<sup>[3]</sup>

Authors often undertake studies that involve data sharing. Data sharing is complex: the approach to balancing data protection and sharing of data differs in countries and organisations.<sup>[4-6]</sup> It is important that authors/researchers should be conversant with the laws of the countries where they reside. For example, Canadian researchers are responsible for protecting the privacy and security of data.<sup>[7]</sup>

The importance of adhering to the principles of informed consent is the responsibility of authors. Participants must be informed if their data is to be shared and the rationale of such sharing.<sup>[4]</sup> Authors are responsible for obtaining consent to share data when they recruit participants, or if they will be using patient data for publication. In terms of the rationale of sharing data an Australian study reported that the majority of healthcare professional respondents were in favour of data sharing if this led to improved patient outcomes.<sup>[8]</sup> In terms of transparency a data sharing agreement should be used.<sup>[9]</sup> South African legislation addresses the collection and use of personal information, processing, storage and sharing.<sup>[10]</sup> Section 11 (1)a of the legislation<sup>[10]</sup> spells out that consent must be obtained for processing personal information.

Participants have the right to refuse sharing of their data. To limit such refusal the wording of informed consent must be simple so that it can be understood by all participants. The

findings of a South African research study on informed consent were that the readability of two-thirds of 75 informed consent forms was difficult hence not appropriate for an average adult with grade 8 level education.<sup>[11]</sup>

Many reviewers have work commitments: it is important that authors should submit manuscripts that reduce unnecessary workloads of reviewers. For example, manuscripts should be language edited: this reduces the time taken by peer reviewers to provide constructive comments to authors. Many reviewers check the accuracy of references. The Vancouver method is used for this journal. Authors therefore must ensure that all references are correct and, if applicable, include doi numbers: reviewers may wish to check the accuracy of a reference using the listed doi number.

Manuscripts submitted to journals are confidential communications hence every effort must be undertaken to safeguard manuscripts throughout the entire process including peer reviewing. After the submission of review comments it is important that reviewers destroy all copies of manuscripts and associated documents.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Leonie Munro**  
Co-editor

ORCID handle: 0000-0001-6889-212X

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