



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Author Order and Quality of Publication - Postdocs

Year

2000

Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about the ethical issues that arise when multiple researchers contribute to a paper.

Body

Bob, a postdoc in Professor Jolly's Lab, initiates a research project consisting of isolating microorganisms that have a particular enzymtic activity against a target molecule. Bob is making excellent progress with the isolation of the microorganism, but Professor Jolly wants to reach a higher quality journal and with greater speed. In order to achieve these goals, Professor Jolly adds Susan, another postdoc, to the project. Susan has extensive experience in protein purification and characterization.

Bob accepts a position elsewhere after 12 months. He writes a paper based on the existing data, but it is not sufficient for the goals Professor Jolly has.

A few months later, another paper-- a full characterization of the molecurel--is written. Most of the data that ends up in the full paper has been generated by Susan. Susan also wrote a considerable part of the manuscript.

Who should be an author? Who should decide the order of the authors? What should that order be? What factors are relevant to determining the order of authors?

Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant. You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at

<http://www.onlineethics.org/Resources/TeachingTools/Modules/19237.aspx>. Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society,Â’s code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

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Use of Materials on the OEC

Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

Parent Collection

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

Topics

Authorship
Collaboration
Publication Ethics
Research and Practice

Discipline(s)

Life and Environmental Sciences
Research Ethics

Publisher

Online Ethics Center