

# Authorship rules for medical journals flouted by pharma industry

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(Medical Xpress) -- Rather than ensure the proper attribution of authorship, rules set up by leading medical journals to define and credit authorship of published articles are exploited by the pharmaceutical industry in its attempt to conceal and misrepresent industry contributions to the literature.

This is a perspective contained in an article by Alastair Matheson, a medical writer based in the UK and Canada, who argues in this week's [PLoS Medicine](#) that the current International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) authorship guidelines allow for industry to exaggerate the contribution of named academic authors and downplay that of commercial writers who are excluded from authorship but listed as contributors in the small print.

Matheson contends that the ICMJE guidelines should be fundamentally revised and the concept of origination given comparable importance to authorship and contributorship. Pharmaceutical companies and writers who work on industry publications should be listed as byline authors, he says.

In another perspective article, Linda Logdberg of Fernbank Science Center, USA, who worked in the medical communication industry for 11 years, offers her personal view of her work and why she did it, writing that "[ethical concerns](#) about [medical ghostwriting](#) have been directed primarily at "guest" authors and the pharmaceutical companies that pay them. One voice that is largely missing is that of the ghostwriters

themselves who, after all, create the documents that are in the ethical and legal crosshairs. Without them, one could argue, there can be no fraud, because it is they who create the fraudulent product."

Provided by Public Library of Science

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