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15th March 2012

Andrew P. Schachat, MD  
Editor-in-Chief, *Ophthalmology*  
c/ Ophthalmology Department, Cleveland Clinic Main Campus  
Mail Code I30, 9500 Euclid Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44195

Dear Dr Schachat,

**Re. Instructions to Authors on Guest and Ghost Authorship**

As medical publication professionals who deplore ghostwriting, we congratulate *Ophthalmology* for providing detailed guidance to authors on appropriate (and inappropriate) authorship practices. We are often in the position of having to advise authors on appropriate authorship practices and have researched, spoken, and published on this topic frequently.<sup>1-10</sup>

We are writing to you today to ask if you would consider updating one paragraph of your instructions. We believe the current instructions on guest and ghost authorship could be misinterpreted. Not being people who complain without offering a solution, and consistent with our penchant for editing, we have proposed changes that we believe enhance the clarity of the instructions. At the end of this letter, we present the original instructions and the tracked changes version (ie, proposed changes included). We strongly believe the distinction between ghostwriting and professional medical writing must be made. As stated by the World Association of Medical Editors (WAME), "To prevent some instances of ghost authorship, editors should make clear in their journal's information for authors that medical writers can be legitimate contributors and that their roles and affiliations should be described in the manuscript." (<http://www.wame.org/resources/policies#authorship>).

We welcome feedback from yourself or your editorial staff on the proposed changes. As we work with authors from around the world on a daily basis, we hope our "frontline" feedback is of interest to you. We will continue to guide authors on ethical authorship and publication practices, but being able to refer to clear and detailed guidance from journals helps reinforce why we insist on these practices.

Sincerely,

Professor Karen Woolley

*On behalf of fellow GAPP members Art Gertel, Dr Cindy Hamilton, Dr Adam Jacobs, and Gene Snyder ([www.gappteam.org](http://www.gappteam.org)).*

*Disclosures: All GAPP members have or do hold leadership roles at associations representing professional medical writers (eg, AMWA, EMWA, DIA, ISMPP, ARCS), but do not speak on behalf of those organizations. GAPP members have or do provide professional medical writing services to not-for-profit and for-profit clients.*

## References

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## Ophthalmology - Instructions to Authors

- Original version

### Guest/Ghost Authors

Based on the definition of "guest authorship" as the designation and acknowledgment of an individual who does not meet authorship criteria and "ghost authorship" as the failure to designate an individual who has made a substantial contribution to the research or writing of a manuscript (see the paper in JAMA. 2008; 299 (15):1800-12), **THE JOURNAL DOES NOT ALLOW GHOST AUTHORSHIP.** If it comes to light that substantial contribution has not been disclosed, the Editor shall advise the corresponding author and withdraw the submission from the system. Any guest authors must a) provide written permission to the corresponding author which is to be uploaded with the submission b) be listed by the corresponding author in the acknowledgments (just above references) for their contribution (e.g., James Smith for statistical analysis.) If the guest author is being acknowledged for writing assistance it should specifically address if the guest author prepared a manuscript draft for the named authors to edit or if the named authors prepared the manuscript and received writing and formatting assistance from guest author. If not self employed, the guest author should disclose the name of their employer and the funding source.

- Tracked changes version

### Guest Authors / Ghost Authors / Ghostwriters

Based on the definitions of "guest authorship" as the designation and acknowledgment of an individual who does not meet authorship criteria, "ghost authorship" as the failure to designate an individual who has made a substantial contribution to the research or writing of a manuscript (JAMA. 2008; 299 (15):1800-12), and "ghostwriting" as the failure to disclose medical writing support and its funding source, **THE JOURNAL DOES NOT ALLOW GUEST AUTHORSHIP, GHOST AUTHORSHIP, OR GHOSTWRITING.** Professional medical writing support, where ethical writing practices are followed and appropriate disclosures are made, is acceptable (BMJ. 2009; 339:b4330). If it comes to light that appropriate authorship or writing practices have not been followed, the Editor shall advise the corresponding author and withdraw the submission from the system. Any contributors who do not meet the authorship criteria must a) provide written permission to the corresponding author which is to be uploaded with the submission b) be listed by the corresponding author in the acknowledgments (just above references) for their contribution (e.g., James Smith for statistical analysis, Jane Taylor from Taylor Medical Communications for medical writing services, funded by XYZ Devices Pty Ltd). If not self employed, the writer should disclose the name of their employer and the funding source. If the medical writer is being acknowledged for writing assistance, the authors should specifically address whether the authors and writer complied with good publication practice (ie, GPP2 as specified in the BMJ 2009; 339.b4330).

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