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The Prevalence of Honorary and Ghost Authorships in Iranian Bio-Medical Journals and Its Associated Factors

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Abstract

Background: The purpose of this study was to detect the prevalence of ghost and honorary authors and its determinant factors in bio-medical journals of Iran.

Methods: The study was done in Tehran, Kerman, and Iran Medical Universities, Iran. We contacted the first or corresponding authors of the papers had published papers in the recent two issues of Iranian Journal of Public Health, Journal of Kerman University of Medical Sciences, and Tehran University Medical Journal. They explored the role of each coauthor and others who had done mouthing for the paper. Then, according to ICMJE criteria, we counted how many of them are real, honorary or ghost author. For the analysis, we utilized two databases. One included articles as the records and the other included authors as the records.

Results: From 124 articles, with 536 authors, 301 (56.1%) were honorary authors. Each article had 4.35 authors on average, while 2.4 of them were honorary authors. The percentage of honorary author in basic science articles was about 6% more than the articles of clinical sciences. Moreover, 89% of articles had at least one honorary author. About 20% of all articles had more than three honorary authors. Besides, 25 (21.43%) authors confessed they had colleague(s) omitted from the authors list, while only one (0.81%) of them met the authorship criteria. The percentage of agreement between the corresponding and the remaining authors on the number of honorary of the authors was about 47.4% (Kappa= 0.27, P= 0.01).

Conclusion: It seems that the present data might assist the authorities to make a decisive decision on amending the process of authorship in Iran.

Keywords: *Journal, Paper, Honorary author, Ghost author, Iran*