



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

An Outrage or "Cultural Difference"?

Author(s)

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2000

Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about the ethical implications of author lists in publications and especially when researchers from different institutions with different authorship practices collaborate.

Body

You and your doctoral supervisor in your home department have been collaborating with a medical research team at a nearby medical school. Because your thesis research has direct applications in new medical technology, your research funding for the year has been provided by the medical school lab directed by Dr. Distinguished.

You have prepared a paper for publication and show your draft to one of your medical coauthors. Your coauthor tells you that Dr. Distinguished's name is always included as the final author on work funded by his lab. You object, pointing out that Dr. Distinguished has very little idea of what the research is about. Your coauthor explains that listing the lab head as the last author is often the practice in medicine, and it certainly is "local custom" here.

What, if anything, should you do?

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 [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

Contributor(s)

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