

InterConnect – principles for authorship

Background

InterConnect is seeking to enable collaborative groupings (or 'ad hoc consortia') to form around research questions that require cross-cohort analysis. It does not want to impose rules or set ways of working on the collaborative groupings that form; the intention is that each grouping decides for itself its own way of working and is autonomous.

However, studies that are considering whether or not to participate in an analysis in InterConnect would like to have an understanding about how authorship of publications will be decided. As such, some of them are looking for guidance prior to the formation of a collective grouping as a whole so that they can discuss internally in their institution/team. The principles below are therefore offered as a framework.

Principles

- (i) Authorship follows the work, in terms of both practical and intellectual contributions, and therefore cannot be pre-determined
- (ii) Substantial contributions can be foreseen through:
 - Leadership of the research
 - Contributions to the formulation of the research question, analytical approach, data harmonisation, conduct of analyses, or interpretation of results
 - Prior data acquisition to establish the contributing study or cohort
- (iii) Proposals for authorship will follow the ICMJE guidelines.
 - All individuals who have made a substantial contribution to the work will have the opportunity to participate in the drafting or review of the manuscript. In addition to making a substantial contribution, authorship will require:
 - Active involvement in drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
 - Final approval of the manuscript and authors will agree to be accountable for the work.
 - Studies will put forward names of individuals who have made substantial contributions and, in doing so, decide for themselves whether the individuals fulfil the authorship criteria according to ICMJE guidelines.
 - The work involved in contributing data to an analysis via the InterConnect approach is not proportional to the size of the study.
 - For individuals with substantial contributions but who do not fulfil all required ICMJE authorship criteria, studies will decide whether the categories of collaborator status or acknowledgement would be more appropriate.
- (iv) All Investigators and staff affiliated to participating studies are welcome to play active roles in addressing the research question through the federated meta-analysis approach.

Case study

Results from the first exemplar research question relating to the association between physical activity in pregnancy and birthweight are now being written up for publication. At the beginning of the collaboration, the collaborative grouping agreed that (i) authorship should follow work and (ii) work was not proportional to the size of the study.

Subsequently the draft manuscript was discussed and it was agreed that cohorts would be represented in an equal way on the paper since they had all contributed equally. Each

cohort was invited to put forward the names of up to 3 people who had done work to contribute to the analysis to be authors; it was also agreed that cohorts would decide for themselves whether their authors fulfilled the ICMJE guidelines.