

WILL YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY?

During the last decade physiotherapists have increasingly been encouraged to become involved in research. In order to maintain and improve our professional status our body of knowledge needs to be thoroughly researched and authenticated.

If research is to be validated it must be submitted to the critical eye of one's colleagues. This can be done only by having the work published in a reputable professional journal.

Are you prepared to take the responsibility of authorship? In the case of a single author no problem of responsibility should be encountered since he must automatically be able to justify his statements. However, most research projects involve a number of people and in that case the question of authorship might arise.

In its guidelines on authorship, the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors drew up the following: "Each author should have participated sufficiently in the work to take public responsibility for the content".¹ This is essential in order for the readers to have confidence in the information.² If a named author has had little to do with the published work, he cannot answer any criticism.

Participation in the work implies: "(a) conception or design, or analysis and interpretation of data, or both; (b) drafting the article or revising it for critically important intellectual content; and (c) final approval of the version to be published. Participation solely in the collection of data does not justify authorship. All elements of an article (a, b and c above) critical to its main conclusions must be attributable to at least one author". There is always a leader in a group and this person should be the first author.

If you have had assistance with your project such as data collection, advice, technical help etc., this should be acknowledged usually at the end of the article and only with the permission of the persons named.

Authorship is not a privilege to be granted to all and sundry, it is a responsibility to be earned by hard work.

Now that the profession is moving into independent status we must become more aware of the pitfalls involved in publication. Research must be justified ethically; it must be reported on accurately without bias to a positive outcome and it must be original. There is so much work to be done that there really is no necessity to use other people's ideas. Most physiotherapists, both in hospital and private practice, could survey their own work thus providing valuable epidemiological information. In our changing health service we will have to justify our existence and we cannot expect any help in this regard.

A body of valid, useful and honest research published in the Journal will go a long way to proving our professionalism. And you, the authors, are responsible for every word published.

L M DAVIDS

References

1. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Guidelines on authorship. *Br Med J* 1985;291:722.
2. Huth EJ. Guidelines on authorship of medical papers. *Ann Intern Med* 1986;104:269-274. ♥

STAFF PHYSIOTHERAPIST REQUIRED

AT MELFORT UNION HOSPITAL, CANADA

Our hospital is an acute care facility of 85 beds. Opened in 1985, our new building services patients with respiratory, neurological, surgical, obstetrical, orthopaedic, and other medical conditions.

The Physiotherapy Department includes inpatients with conditions listed above plus a large outpatient population. In addition, the Physiotherapy Department is well equipped.

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