

### (5.3) Permission for acknowledgments

You recently had a manuscript accepted for publication in which you received general advice from your mentor Dr. Perry. The manuscript's Discussion includes somewhat controversial comments regarding the topic at hand. While conducting the investigation, you had informal conversations regarding the methods with Dr. Perry, who provided broad suggestions for the project but otherwise did not contribute substantially to actual data collection, analysis, or manuscript drafting and revision. While Dr. Perry did not fulfill the criteria for authorship, you decided to recognize her relatively limited contribution through an Acknowledgement.

After the manuscript is published, Dr. Perry asked to speak with you. She indicates that her colleagues have recently approached her with inquiries regarding this study with which she was "involved." She did not have an opportunity to read the manuscript until after it was published, and now she is concerned as she does not fully agree with all statements made within the Discussion and does not wish to be associated with its content. How should the situation have been handled differently to have avoided this situation?

#### Comments

Including an individual within the Acknowledgments section of a manuscript may suggest that the individual fully endorses the manuscript's content, even if not meeting the criteria to be included as an author. On this basis, the ICMJE advises that authors should have individuals who are acknowledged by name read the final version of the manuscript and provide written approval of being acknowledged. Many journals currently require that authors submit such written proof at the time of manuscript submission. When submitting to journals that do not have such a policy, authors are advised nonetheless to share the final manuscript with those being acknowledged and to obtain their written approval. A similar principle applies for individuals who are cited parenthetically within the text via a personal communication.

In the present case, it is apparent that the journal did not require receipt of written approval from individuals being acknowledged. However, you still should have provided Dr. Perry with an opportunity to read the manuscript and to either agree with or decline receiving the acknowledgment. Depending on the journal's policies, it may be permissible to send a letter to the editor, signed by all authors as well as by Dr. Perry, explaining the situation and asking that the manuscript of record be modified to remove her inclusion within the Acknowledgments section.

#### References

- 1) Radiologic Society of North America. *Radiology* Publication Information for Authors. <http://pubs.rsna.org/page/radiology/pia/preparation#Acknowledgments> Accessed: December 23, 2015.
- 2) International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Defining the Role of Authors and Contributors. <http://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html> Accessed: December 23, 2015.
- 3) American Heart Association. Acknowledgment Permission Form. <http://www.ahajournals.org/site/misc/permission.xhtml>