

Ghostwriting: An Existing Problem

To the Editor:

The recent publication on ghostwriting is interesting.¹ I would like to share my experience with this subject. Indeed, ghostwriting may be a common problem that is rarely mentioned. In a recent report, Wislar et al² state that “21% of articles published in major medical journals” might pose the problem of ghost authorship. Although it is accepted that ghost authorship is unethical in medical literature, it is still prevalent for many reasons.³ The high rate of the problem should be discussed. In many cultures, especially in developing countries in Asia, honorary giving as ghost authorship is practiced commonly. This is performed usually to satisfy the senior writer, such as a dean, chancellor, or department head. The junior writer may have to be the ghost author. One may simply be forced to write a paper to serve his/her

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senior (eg, the student is forced to work for the advisor or the young staff member is forced to work for the mentor). Thus, the management of this problem is difficult because the institute may take no action. The question of how to effectively prevent and manage the problem of ghostwriting remains.

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