

Over enthusiastic young student researchers; implications for the supervisors

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Madam, this communication aims to shed the light on a major struggle faced by many supervisors who are supporting undergraduate research projects.

The role of undergraduate research is gaining in popularity, whereby most schools of medicine and other specialties require undergraduate research as a necessary graduation component.¹ This in addition to the fact that most universities and professional bodies mandate prior research for admission into their postgraduate programmes. All this aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to ultimately exemplify the practical implications of knowledge.² As a consequence, faculty members are key figures in the success of this attempt to promote the research culture among undergraduates through mentoring and supervision.³ After providing all the necessary input when it comes to publishing the research, the supervisor's name might be omitted as a co-author. This happens in many instances whereby students play the role of corresponding author with the journal. In such a scenario, many journals only require the contact details and email of the corresponding author for submission/acceptance. Therefore, extra caution should be exercised by journals when students are the first or corresponding author. In other instances, the corresponding author might provide a non-valid institutional email address which is common when the supervisor moves to another institution.

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Research misconduct in this case occurs as a result of failing to attribute other author/s which is commonly known as ghost authorship. All this implies an insufficient exposure of undergraduates to bioethics education and practice.⁴ Solutions to this issue can include requiring additional measures such as providing a copy of approved proposal, email and contact details of all the members enlisted as authors and those who are acknowledged in order to prevent any future authorship disputes that might arise post paper publication.

In conclusion, young student researchers should be encouraged to publish but care should be taken by the journals in order to ensure the integrity of scientific publications. Along with providing students with the research principles, bioethics and authorship rights are not any less significant and should be instilled in the minds of our future researchers.

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