

<http://reesenews.org/2010/10/28/uncs-school-of-medicine-to-unveil-policy-that-prohibits-ghostwriting/1236/>

## **Med school to prohibit ‘ghostwriting’**

### **Deceptive practice part of new conflict of interest policy**

Feb 3 2012

We believe medical schools, around the world, should ban ghostwriting and ensure they clarify what ghostwriting is. We would also like to alert your readers that the "unpublished" paper by the JAMA editors referred to in the article was published last year (see Wislar et al., BMJ, 2011 - see <http://www.bmj.com/content/343/bmj.d6128>). Interestingly, the authors were asked to issue a correction, which highlights how low the prevalence of ghostwriting actually was:

"the percentage of ghost authors present when a corresponding author reported that an unnamed individual participated in writing the article should be 0.16%, not 0.3%."

The percentage of ghostwriting should, ideally, be 0.00%, but when strong critics of ghostwriting publish their research showing it is 0.16%, it may be that the intense media and political attention focused on ghostwriting and the efforts from medical writing associations, universities, and journal editors to distinguish ghostwriting from professional medical writing have had some effect.

Please note that ghostwriting, which is unethical, is not the same as professional medical writing assistance, which is an ethical and legitimate practice. Evidence shows that authors who work with professional medical writers (assistance disclosed and ethical practices followed) can submit higher quality manuscripts (ie, more compliant with CONSORT - see Jacobs EMWA Journal 2011) and are less likely to have their manuscripts retracted because of misconduct - see Woolley et al. CMRO 2011). Most importantly, perhaps, professional medical writers can provide the time and expert guidance required to help authors meet their ethical and scientific responsibility of publishing (sharing) their research findings.

Professor Karen Woolley on behalf of fellow GAPP members Dr Cindy Hamilton, Dr Adam Jacobs, Art Gertel, and Gene Snyder ([www.gappteam.org](http://www.gappteam.org)).

Disclosures: All GAPP members have or do hold leadership roles at associations representing professional medical writers (eg, AMWA, EMWA, DIA, ISMPP, ARCS), but do not speak on behalf of those organisations. GAPP members have or do provide professional medical writing services to not-for-profit and for-profit clients.