Authors' reply

We thank Dr Rupa V., Dr Nagoba B.S. and their colleagues for their comments on our editorial.[1,2] Both the groups generally agree with our propositions, with Rupa and colleagues suggesting some changes.

Credit for authorship is a balancing act between giving credit to all those who deserve it versus avoiding the scourge of 'gift authorship'. Our editorial recommends credit to all the authors in order to encourage interdepartmental research and to prevent junior researchers from being denied their due which Nagoba and colleagues agree with. Any restriction in this context as suggested by Rupa and colleagues has a potential for harm—with credit being limited to the senior authors, who may be in a stronger position to influence their relative position in the authorship list. One wonders whether in India we have carried the 'one size fits all' approach too far in the name of 'being objective'—and whether a subjective decision by a selection committee based on an individual's actual contribution (e.g. the volume of work reported in a paper, the multidisciplinary nature of the work, and the expertise of a particular author) may be the way forward.

We wish to reiterate that our editorial, written on behalf of the Indian Association of Medical Journal Editors, focused mainly on issues related to the publication process, and not on the criteria for faculty promotions, which is an entirely different debate. However, we emphasize that credit based on impact factor, as suggested by Rupa and colleagues, will pose a fresh set of challenges, given that the concept, application and the potential for manipulation of this measure have been the subject of widespread critique and debate in the literature.[3]

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