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## Authorship and Publication Matters: Comment

### To the Editor:

The recent editorial on authorship and publication matters<sup>1</sup> among various problems of authorship addresses the question of escalating author counts in academic journals. The editorial indicates that between 1970 and 2010, the number of articles with 6 to 10 authors increased more than tenfold, and that multiauthorship (more than 10 authors) is now common, especially in major medical journals.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon may reflect author inflation. I wondered whether the escalating author count is also common among anesthesia publications.

The recently published article identified the most influential original clinical articles that fomented important developments in anesthesiology over the past 50 yr.<sup>3</sup> Forty-five such studies (introducing a new drug or a new technique) were identified; 21 of them were published in 1965 to 1984, the other 24 during 1985 to 2007. Table 1 compares the author counts of these two groups and shows that the articles published two decades later reflect some increase in the number of authors per article, from 3.6 to 5.1. The change was especially noticeable

for the number of articles with two authors (five 1965 to 1984 articles *vs.* one 1985 to 2007 article) and five authors (nil 1965 to 1984 articles *vs.* nine 1985 to 2007 articles). However, significant multiauthorship was not observed, with the top count not exceeding 11 authors. In addition, the rise in the average number of authors per article was 4.5-fold less than that reported for three major general medical journals.<sup>4</sup>

Multiauthorship, whether it is attributable to collaboration or not, should not be considered as a sign of success. Each of the above-mentioned 45 articles represents a major success confirmed by decades of clinical practice. The success was achieved by a relatively small group of authors, both in 1965 to 1984 and 1985 to 2007.

### Competing Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

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**Table 1.** Number of Authors among Anesthesia Articles Published in 1965 to 2007

Years	Total Number	Number of Articles with 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or > 6 Authors, Respectively							Authors per Article
		1	2	3	4	5	6	> 6	
1965 to 1984	21	0	5	8	5	0	2	1	3.6
1985 to 2007	24	0	1	3	4	9	5	2	5.1

## Authorship and Publication Matters: Reply

### In Reply:

I appreciate Dr. Kissin's interest<sup>1</sup> in the ANESTHESIOLOGY editorial which described, in the context of authorship integrity, escalating author counts in academic journals.<sup>2</sup> He wonders whether escalating author count is also common among anesthesia publications. He cites his own article on "the most influential original clinical articles that fomented important developments in anesthesiology over the past 50 yr."<sup>3</sup> He concludes that there has been "some increase" in author numbers, that the rise in the average number of authors per article was much less than that in three major general medical journals, that significant multiauthorship was not observed, and the top count did not exceed 11 authors.

The analysis of Dr. Kissin is only partial. First, the analysis in his letter stops at 2007,<sup>1</sup> yet his own article, used as the basis for his letter, analyzes to 2015.<sup>3</sup> Second, the analysis in his article was not systematic, and, what constitutes "influential" is purely one opinion.

I conducted a systematic analysis of all the articles published in seven major anesthesiology journals (ANESTHESIOLOGY, *Anesthesia & Analgesia*, *Anesthesia*, *British Journal of Anesthesia*, *Critical Care Medicine*, *Pain*, and *Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine*), from 1965 (or later if it commenced publication after that date) until the present (n = 123,431). The analysis determined the mean number of authors per article each year. In addition, the analysis determined the number of articles published each year with 10 or more authors (multiauthorship).

The results of the author analysis are shown in figure 1. First, it is abundantly clear that the average number of authors per article has increased steadily over the past 55 yr. The average number of authors ( $\pm$  SD) per article in 1965 was  $2 \pm 1$  (median 2, n = 400), which increased to  $6 \pm 5$  (median 5, n = 2,614) in 2021 (to date). Second, it is also clear that the number of multiauthor articles (10 or more authors per article) across these seven journals has increased approximately exponentially, from a total of zero in 1965 to a total of 455 in 2020 (from a median of zero to 65 multiauthored articles per journal). The top count was 100 authors in one manuscript. Third, this pattern is consistent across all seven anesthesiology journals.

The letter from Dr. Kissin notwithstanding, the comprehensive analysis reveals data on author numbers per article and multiauthorship that are entirely consistent with data pertaining to general scientific publication as cited in the editorial.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the threefold increase in author number in anesthesia journals is comparable with the threefold

increase in author number reported for the three major general medical journals (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, *British Medical Journal*) cited by Dr. Kissin.<sup>4</sup> Escalating author count is indeed also common among anesthesia publications.

### Competing Interests

The author declares no competing interests.

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## 2020 Severinghaus Lecture on Translational Science: Comment

### To the Editor:

The article "Anesthesiology: Resetting Our Sights on Long-term Outcomes: The 2020 John W. Severinghaus Lecture on Translational Science" describes the Ether Monument as if it were located in the Boston Common, the oldest city park in the United States.<sup>1</sup> This is not correct. The Ether Monument is located in the Public Garden near the intersection of Beacon and Arlington Streets. Although