



# Doing ethics with AI: Can LLMs be “junior authors” on bioethics papers?

Brian D. Earp

Associate Professor of Biomedical Ethics

Associate Professor of Philosophy (joint)

Associate Professor of Psychology (joint)

National University of Singapore

Director, Oxford-NUS Centre for Neuroethics and Society

University of Oxford and NUS

# Topic Collection: Doing ethics with AI

## Doing ethics with AI

We invite submissions for a topic collection on “*Doing ethics with AI.*” Advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are rapidly transforming healthcare and research. While much scholarship to date has focused on the **ethics of AI** (examining risks such as bias, privacy, and accountability), less attention has been paid to the reverse question: **how can AI itself be used to support ethical deliberation?**

 [Submit your manuscript](#)

This topic collection will explore ways in which AI tools (for example, large language models (LLMs) and decision-support systems) might assist in analysing moral problems, generating or testing ethical arguments, and informing normative conclusions in clinical, biomedical, and public ethics contexts.

**Submissions Open | Submission Deadline: 24th May 2026**

# JME Practical Bioethics



Sebastian  
Porsdam Mann



Xiaojun  
Ding



Hossein  
Dabbagh

INFORMATION



INFORMATION

...Can LLMs be “junior authors” on bioethics papers?

No, not right now...

They can be *analogous* to...

Maybe in the future (part 2)

What about the “senior” author?

Can a human who **prompts an LLM to write a paper** count as a “senior” author on the paper—in the limit case, without, herself, writing a single word?



*A senior author deciding whether to task an LLM or a postdoc with drafting a paper. Image created with Perplexity.*







# Authorship Without Writing: Large Language Models and the “Senior Author” Analogy

Clint Hurshman, Sebastian Porsdam Mann, Julian Savulescu,  
and Brian D. Earp



**AI use statement.** ChatGPT was used to help format Box 1. AI was not used in the preparation or writing of any other part of this manuscript.

Preprint available here

# Authorship Without Writing: Large Language Models and the “Senior Author” Analogy

Hurshman et al.



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# Is Smith an author of the paper?

The ICMJE requires that an author meet all four of the following criteria (2019 version):

- **Substantial contributions** to the conception/design of the work *or* acquisition/analysis/interpretation of data.
- **Drafting the work or revising it critically** for important intellectual content.
- **Final approval** of the version to be published.
- **Accountability** for all aspects of the work, ensuring integrity and accuracy.

# Is Smith an author of the paper?

Applying the criteria to Professor Smith:

- **Criterion 1 (Conception/design):**

- ✓ Smith contributes the **basic idea for the thesis, rough structure, and key citations**. That counts as substantial input into conception/design.

- **Criterion 2 (Drafting/revising):**

- ✓ While Charlie produces the draft, Smith engages in **critical review and suggestions for improvement**—which is explicitly recognized by ICMJE as satisfying the “revising it critically” clause.

# Is Smith an author of the paper?

- **Criterion 3 (Final approval):**

✓ Smith **reviews and signs off** on the manuscript after confirming its quality and contribution.

- **Criterion 4 (Accountability):**

✓ By attaching her name, she accepts **responsibility for the integrity** of the work.



# Second case

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## The really central argument

P1. If Smith is an author, Jones is an author.

P2. Smith is an author.

C. Jones is an author.

# Objections

Deny P1: Smith and Jones are relevantly different (e.g., mentorship...)

Deny P2: Smith is not an author (i.e., we should change our authorship criteria)

Deny P1: Smith and Jones are relevantly different: “senior” vs. “sole” author

## Preview of a new argument

P1. There is a **fairness-based** reason to list LLMs as “junior” authors (in specified cases)

P2. The main reason currently cited for why LLMs cannot be listed as authors is unconvincing/false

C1. Reasons to list LLMs as “junior” authors (in specified cases) outweigh the reasons against

C2. We should list LLMs as “junior” authors (in specified cases)

# P2. The main reason currently cited for why LLMs cannot be listed as authors is unconvincing/false



Article  
Text



Article  
info

Current controversy

## Responsibility is not required for authorship

 [Neil Levy](#)<sup>1, 2</sup>

Correspondence to Professor Neil Levy; [neil.levy@philosophy.ox.ac.uk](mailto:neil.levy@philosophy.ox.ac.uk)

# Thoughts? Questions?

- Thank you!
- [bdearp@nus.edu.sg](mailto:bdearp@nus.edu.sg)
- @briandavidearp



**NUS**  
National University  
of Singapore