The problems with invisible ink (nonpublication of research) and invisible writers (ghost writers) may share a common solution. Reduce the amount of invisible ink by replacing invisible writers with visible writers.

Given that one-third to two-thirds of medical research may remain unpublished [1,2], primarily because researchers have limited writing time or expertise, we should support deserving researchers with professional medical writers who (and here is the clincher...) know how to work in an ethical and efficient manner. [3] If the unnecessary veil of secrecy surrounding medical writers was lifted, the appropriate and visible declaration of medical writer involvement in industry publications would increase from approximately 10%. [4] More importantly, the risk of nonpublication, due to limited writing time or expertise, could be reduced.


Competing interests: KW is a University lecturer in medical writing and employs PhD-qualified professional medical writers, who work for academic and industry clients.