Case 1: Who is an Author?

You are a part of a lab that has just concluded research on the efficacy of a new drug treatment for childhood asthma. At the next lab meeting you are to discuss authorship for the resulting publication. Please consider the appropriateness of each of the individuals listed below in the authorship listing; where in the listing each might be; and what the responsibilities resulting from inclusion as an author might be:

a) The lab manager who has contributed to the research by offering a few suggestions from time to time but who has not been a part of the research process other than in his role of maintaining the laboratory.

b) A representative from the drug manufacturer. She has offered substantial contributions. (Consider this individual under two circumstance: (1) the drug manufacturer is requiring her to be listed as an author (2) the drug manufacturer is requiring there to be no mention of the company in any publication.)

c) A post-doc who is no longer a part of the lab but who had facilitated the partnership between the lab and the drug company, written much of the protocol and obtained significant funding for the project.

d) You and several other graduate students who did the majority of the work and analysis.

e) Another graduate student who was assigned a portion of the work. His portion did not yield any results that could be included in the publication but was instructive to the work the rest of you were doing.

f) The lab technician who brought up several key points from some literature she had been reading on related work.

g) The biostatistician who has helped the lab with the finer points of various analyses.

h) The PI who has been rather “hands off” on this project.

i) A post-doc who joined the lab about a year ago, has made some contributions to the research project and who has a lot of pressure to publish something soon.

With your decisions in mind, draft a policy (or suggest elements for a policy) on authorship that would be used by your lab in the future (either now, or when you are PI).