



**2ND WORLD
CONFERENCE
ON RESEARCH
INTEGRITY**

PAN PACIFIC HOTEL SINGAPORE
21-24 JULY 2010

Welcome Speech by

MR LIM CHUAN POH
CHAIRMAN

AGENCY FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH (A*STAR)

2ND WORLD CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY 2010

Thursday, 22 July 2010, 9.00am
Pacific Ballroom
Pan Pacific Hotel

Minister,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to add my warm welcome to all of you to the 2nd World Conference on Research Integrity in Singapore.

A*STAR considers research integrity as a key and fundamental pillar of any organisation that is serious about the Science and Technology (S&T) enterprise. For this reason, A*STAR is proud to be one of the co-sponsors for this conference.

I am heartened to learn that more than 350 concerned scientists, scientific leaders and magazine editors from Singapore and around the world share a similar view and have registered to attend this conference. This augurs well for what we are trying to achieve in this conference.

A*STAR's Priority on Research Integrity

Across the world, and in particular in Asia, the scientific enterprise has grown significantly over the last 10 years. In the process, the competition to be the first to publish has also phenomenally intensified. Under such intense competition, lapses in research conduct can and do happen. Each time it happens, it has a huge impact not just for the individuals involved, but the institution and sometimes even the host countries of the research efforts. It can even potentially derail international efforts in combating global challenges. All of us in this room and many outside, therefore, share a common desire to shape and create a research environment that will be more conducive for and better promote responsible conduct of research.

A*STAR regards research integrity as a critical pillar of our enterprise for four main reasons.

Firstly, our research is becoming more collaborative with many partnerships transcending both organisational as well as national borders. We are involved in both national scale research consortia as well as many bilateral and multilateral research partnerships with counterpart agencies in other countries. We also witnessed many more research collaborations with private sector enterprises. For such cross-border and multi-organisational collaborations to be effective and successful, there must be mutual confidence and trust in what each party is bringing to the partnerships or collaborations and how each party goes about conducting its business. A strong reputation of upholding a generally accepted common code of research ethics and integrity will go a long way to facilitate such complex collaborations and partnerships.

Secondly, the notion of 'publish or perish' is a very real fear amongst many budding as well as established researchers. Given the increased research efforts across the world, this fear is only going to increase. As a research organisation, A*STAR strives to create an environment that promotes and nurtures the value of responsible conduct in research. This, of course, is easier said than done and requires exemplary conduct on a day to day basis by the senior researchers and scientific leadership. The junior scientists generally take their cue from their seniors.

Thirdly, through our Biomedical Research Council, A*STAR is one of the key partners of the academic medical centres and hospitals in translational and clinical research. In this regard, the conduct of clinical trials involving human subjects and laboratory experiments with animals has to be subject to strict bioethical codes and requirements.

And finally, for an organisation that depends largely on public monies for research, A*STAR, and in particular our scientists, must continue to win the confidence of the public in how we conduct our research. This is what A*STAR needs to remain credible as an organisation and to sustain the strong public support for our endeavours.

Having a framework for research ethics and integrity is thus of utmost importance to A*STAR and the wider R&D community.

Challenges Related to Research Integrity

However, it is one thing to deal with the issue of research integrity within an organisation or a country like Singapore. It is quite a different matter to put in place a common code globally as we do have significant differences in our regulations and codes. For instance, I was told that there is no common definition worldwide for research misconduct, conflict of interest or plagiarism. Even where there is general agreement on key elements of research behaviour, such as the need to restrict authorship to individuals who make substantive contributions to the research or to provide protection for research subjects, the policies that implement this agreement can vary widely from country to country and organisation to organisation. The research community worldwide therefore needs to address these problems and to establish clear best practice frameworks at an international level.

We should also consider some of the greatest challenges that mankind currently face – issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, infectious diseases, and depletion of energy resources that have significant impact globally. Given the scale of the challenge, the only sensible way for us to go forward is to call on the multitude of expertise to work collaboratively across the world. This ability to work together will be greatly enhanced by a generally accepted code of research ethics and conduct. Any seeming lack of research integrity here can significantly undermine public confidence in the credibility of the efforts and therefore the influence and impact of the research outcomes.

Conclusion

On this note, I hope that this conference will provide a productive opportunity for the exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences on research integrity.

I wish everyone fruitful discussions over the next two days.

I also hope that our overseas delegates will bring back fond memories of their time in Singapore.

Thank you very much