Efforts and Challenges in Ensuring Research Integrity in the United States

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Federal Funding/Accountability

Congress/President

Federal Agencies (NSF, HHS, Energy, NASA, Commerce, EPA, ...)

Universities, Businesses, K-12
Research Integrity Accountability
Government Roles

• OSTP – Dec 6, 2000 overarching Research Misconduct (RM) policy
  • Establishes definitions, elements of a finding, phases (inquiry, investigation, adjudication)
  • Agencies and institution share responsibility for process
  • Institutions bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection

• Regulatory
  • Each Agency Policy Structured after OSTP policy to fit within that agency
    • All have FFP, preponderance, intent, significant departure
    • Agencies will coordinate where joint funding exists
  • Joint Agency RM Working Group
  • OHRP (human research), OLAW (laboratory animals), OSHA(biohazards)

• Statutory
  • Criminal and/or civil statutes: Fraud, COI, False Statements, Embezzlement, Conversion

• Potential outcomes range from reprimand to suspension of research to incarceration

• Audits – Includes reviews of award expenditures, assessments of award processes
Research Integrity Accountability
Non-Governmental Roles

• National Academy of Sciences
  • New publication on Fostering Integrity in Research
• Private Monitoring Sites (e.g. Retraction Watch, PubPeer)
• Universities
  • Investigation Committees
  • RCR training
  • Fostering overall ethical climate
• Professional Societies and Journals
  • Policies on Research Integrity
  • Data Review
  • COPE
• Private funding sources
Research Integrity and Transparency

• Civil/Criminal prosecutions are a matter of public record
• RM and other integrity investigations are often administrative
  • Privacy Act limits – balance between public need to know and personal privacy
  • Routine Use
• NSF – RM cases discussed in OIG’s Semiannual Reports to Congress; case closeouts posted on OIG’s website: https://www.nsf.gov/oig/office-inv/administrative.jsp
• ORI – Results of RM cases often published in Federal Register and newsletters
• Policy on release of info will vary with each agency
• Universities: Public vs Private
• Private Sector: Internal policy/practice
• PubPeer and RetractionWatch
Harmonization

• US system has overarching guidance for federally funded research
  • Decentralization of research and the RM process can result in disparate conclusions for similar cases
  • Research institutions have RM process in place to address federally funded research but can use that process to address private funding
  • No need to notify federal agencies about RM resulting from private funding

• International harmonization can be enhanced by:
  • Establishing policies and procedures to address research integrity violations within the existing legal structure
  • Working collaboratively in cases of violations that involve multiple international organizations

• OECD
  • [https://www.oecd.org/sti/sci-tech/40188303.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/sti/sci-tech/40188303.pdf)
  Best practices for ensuring scientific integrity and preventing misconduct
Case Study

- University scientist submits proposal with text and intellectual property belonging to European scientists

- Subject served as peer reviewer for European agency

- University determines that subject committed both verbatim plagiarism and intellectual theft

- OIG finds plagiarism, intellectual theft and violation of peer review process

- NSF Concurs

- Subject debarred for one year
Contact Information

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Questions?