Own it!
Deliberating serious research misconduct at institutions where the misconduct occurred

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Problem

• Institutions “warehouse” their misconduct cases.
  – Contributes lack of transparency and accountability

• Is there another way?
Reflexive Deliberation

• “Reflexivity” encourages self-reflection, transparency, and critical dialogue.
• Can and should be applied to internal misconduct when appropriate.
Duke Cases

• Pulmonary research misconduct and embezzlement ($112.5 million settlement)

• Translational Omics ("Anil Potti") case
Translational Omics (T.O.) Case

- 2006-2012
- Fabrication & falsification in grants and publications
- Conflicts of interest
- Lack of timely & effective response
- Questions about clinical trial safety
- Mentorship, authorship, peer-review issues
Key Consequences

- $7-10 million paid for grant and investor claims and legal fees
- 11 retractions
- Ongoing federal scrutiny & intervention
- Loss of morale and trust in institution
Institutional Response

Education
Oversight
Policy
Support
RCR Education at Duke

• Ongoing & mandatory for ALL research faculty, staff, administrators, and managers at Duke
• Expanded for students and trainees (but not mandatory in all cases)
RCR Education Infrastructure

- Collaborative Learning Opportunities (1 every 4 years)
  - RCR Toolbox (Unit-led RCR)
  - RCR Workshops
  - Research Town Halls
  - Research Quality and Reproducibility Online Modules
  - CITI Online RCR training
- Online Learning Opportunities (1 every 3 years)
RCR Workshops

• Held monthly
• Presentations on misconduct, detrimental research practices (DRPs)
• 70-min break-out session on T.O. Case
Omics Case Deliberation

• Used a scripted, 3-page narrative
• Nondirective reaction phase followed by questions for discussion
  – E.g., what do you think went wrong?
  – What can individual researchers do to prevent this sort of thing from happening again?
  – What can departments and institutions do?
Workshop Images
Themes

• Misconduct unacceptable, highly damaging
• Institution bears significant blame
• Reporting concerns (i.e., whistleblowing) is unlikely among career-vulnerable individuals
• This may happen again
Some Feedback

• Workshop Participant A: “What really drove the conversation for me were the individuals [at the workshop] who were around when [the Omics case] occurred. It completely changed the viewpoint of the scripted text for me.”
More Feedback

• Participant B: “I love that this ‘public discussion’ of RCR is happening. I hope it continues. I would like, going forward, to see concrete strategies come out of these efforts to address the ‘culture’ issues that get in the way of ethical research practice….”
Discussion

• RCR programs are a logical platform for deliberating internal misconduct.

• Key factors:
  – Institutional leaders should initiate
  – Process must be meaningful, authentic
Challenges

• Involving less empowered stakeholders
• Keeping leaders visibly involved & receptive to feedback, calls for action
• Anticipating vulnerabilities and risks
Conclusion

• Institutions should “own” their histories of misconduct.
• RCR programs may be less meaningful and effective without them.
• Best practices and research on outcomes are needed.