



Raising Awareness about Misconduct in Research and Investigation into the same at NCBS

Misconduct in Research

Research misconduct refers to the fabrication (reportage of experiments never performed), falsification (misreporting or suppression of data to project a desired result), and plagiarism (reporting another's data as your own) of material by any member of the community at NCBS in any aspect related to the conduct of research. Breach of confidentiality i.e. presenting as one's own, ideas or data obtained from privileged access to original grants, manuscripts etc. is also considered a misdemeanor in the same category.

NCBS will organize seminars and workshops at regular intervals to facilitate discussion and generate awareness about issues related to integrity in the conduct of research. NCBS website will also provide access to articles, debates and examples of such misconduct to sensitize researchers about the nature of questionable research practice.

(Recommended readings: On Being a Scientist: Responsible Conduct in Research, National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine; Rossner and Yamada 2004, What's in a picture? The temptation of image manipulation *J. Cell Biology* 166, 11-15; Editorial, 2006 Beautification and Fraud, *Nature Cell Biology* 8, 101 – 102)

Investigation into Alleged Misconduct

The charge of research misconduct has serious implications for all concerned therefore investigation related to the review of alleged misconduct will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. Caution will have to be exercised to distinguish between differences in interpretation or unintended errors from the misrepresentation of information. Thus, the procedures adopted to address the issue of misconduct will have to be flexible and determined on a case-by case basis.

Reporting and evaluation of the complaint

Reports of alleged misconduct are to be made directly to the office of the Dean or Director NCBS. Misconduct may be reported by a member(s) of the community at NCBS or elsewhere. The identity of the individual making the complaint (complainant) will not be revealed at this time. In case of potential conflict of interest, the complaint may be made to the Head, Academics, NCBS.

A preliminary evaluation of the complaint will be made by the Dean and the Director, (which may include consultations with other colleagues) and if both concur that there are no reasonable grounds for the allegation, the complaint will be dismissed. A written report stating the reasons for the dismissal shall be maintained in the Office of the Dean but will not enter the subject's confidential record. The complainant will also be notified of the dismissal.

Investigating a credible complaint

If, the preliminary evaluation indicates that the allegation of misconduct warrants a full investigation, the following processes will be initiated with appropriate records of procedures:

- The person against whom the complaint is being made (subject) will be informed of the allegations
- The Dean in consultation with the Director will appoint a committee to conduct a full investigation into the allegation of misconduct.
- The committee may comprise members of the Faculty at NCBS or if appropriate experts from outside the Institute may be requested to serve on the committee. The committee will be invested with complete confidentiality and will not be permitted to interact with the Press during the course of the investigation. The committee is expected to function with full cognizance of the rights of the subject and the complainant.

The investigation will assess:

- the accuracy of the charge of misconduct
- the extent and nature of the alleged misconduct,
- the relevance of any other material or information revealed in the course of the investigation into the alleged instance of misconduct

In the course of the investigation the committee will be given access to grants, reports, primary data, electronic records, manuscripts and any other material requested, considered relevant to the inquiry. The committee will have access to laboratory premises and permitted interviews with laboratory personnel, the complainant and the subject. The committee is expected to complete its investigation at the earliest not exceeding a period of sixty (60) days.

Outcome of the Investigation

The committee will submit its report with a recommended course of action to the Dean, NCBS in a time frame decided at the outset of the investigation.

The Dean will discuss the report with the subject and forward the findings of the committee, along with his/her recommendations, to the Director. If the subject of the complaint has engaged in research misconduct, the Director will take appropriate action which will be communicated to the Dean and the committee. The subject of the complaint will be notified in writing of the Director's decision, which will enter the subject's confidential record.

Safeguard against malafide intention

Every effort will be made to safeguard the interests of the complainant. If established however, that the charges were motivated by malice, the Dean and Director will formulate an appropriate course of action against the individual[s] concerned.

The above policy was discussed and approved by the NCBS Management Board at its 26th Meeting held on January 17, 2009.



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Secretary, NCBS Management Board