

Research Misconduct

Introduction

Researcher should be aware of research misconduct. Research misconduct is defined as: “fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or other practices that seriously deviate from those that are commonly accepted within the scientific community for proposing, conducting, or reporting research.”

- Fabrication is making up data or results and recording or reporting them.
- Falsification is changing research materials, equipment, or processes or altering or omitting data or results so that the research record does not accurately reflect the research findings.
- Plagiarism is using another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit

Research misconduct does not include honest error or differences of opinion. Noncompliance with policies and procedures for the protection of human research subjects, although reportable to an Institutional Review Board (IRB), is not considered to be research misconduct

Identifying Research Misconduct

Research misconduct destroys the integrity or honesty of the research record. This sets it apart from other improper activities that may occur in research settings (e.g., financial conflicts of interest, misuse of grant funds, violation of human subject protections, sexual harassment, and discrimination). Although these improper activities are taken very seriously, they are not considered research misconduct because they do not alter the integrity of the research record.

The term fraud has often been used to describe dishonesty in research. However, this term is more aptly used to describe illegal, deceptive financial practices. Behavior that destroys the integrity of the research record through fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism is most aptly termed *research misconduct*.

All three of the elements below must be present for a finding of research misconduct to be made

- There be a significant departure from accepted practices of the relevant research community; and
- The misconduct be committed intentionally, or knowingly, or recklessly; and
- The allegation be proven by a preponderance of the evidence.

Investigating Allegations of Research Misconduct

Responsible for investigating allegations of research misconduct are:

- Research Institutions; and
- Individual Researchers
- The persons selected to investigate allegations of research misconduct must have appropriate expertise and no unresolved conflicts of interest.

Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct

Generally, the response to an allegation of research misconduct has three stages:

- Inquiry (to assess the facts of the allegation).
- Investigation (if the inquiry provides adequate basis for one).
- Adjudication (imposing of suitable penalties if the allegation is found to have merit).

Safeguards for Informants and Accused Persons

Ensuring Fairness and Timeliness in Responding to Allegations of Research Misconduct

Safeguards for Informants: there should be safeguard for informant

Objectivity and Expertise of Investigators:

- Timeliness-Reasonable time limits must be set for the response to an allegation of research misconduct. Extensions of time may be allowed when necessary
- Confidentiality should be kept

Possible Penalties for Research Misconduct

Research institutions may penalize researchers who are found to have committed research misconduct

Penalties are determined by the severity of the misconduct. Factors that are considered in choosing a penalty may include the degree to which the misconduct:

- Was committed in a knowing, intentional, or reckless manner.
- Was an isolated event or part of a pattern.
- Had a significant impact on the research record, research subjects, other researchers, institutions, or the public welfare.

The penalties may include (depending upon the nature of misconduct):

- Correction of the research record.
- Letters of reprimand.
- Suspension or termination of a research grant.
- Suspension or debarment from receiving federal funds.

Penalties for research misconduct will be decided by *Institute/IRB/ SGNHC Research Unit.*