Fall 2013 Course in the Responsible Conduct of Research

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http://weill.cornell.edu/research/researcher/msimmerling/biography.html
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Course Description:

The topic of this course is conducting research responsibly. Learning how to do so is an essential component of research training; awareness and application of established professional norms and ethical principles is required in the performance of all activities related to scientific research. Weill Cornell Medical College is committed to fostering an environment that promotes the practicing scientific investigation with integrity. This course helps to fulfill that commitment.

Course Participants:

The course is open to all members of the WCMC research community. Successful completion of the course is required for all trainees, fellows, participants, and scholars receiving support through NIH or NSF Institutional Research Training Grants, Individual Fellowship Awards, Career Development Awards (Institutional and Individual), Research Education Grants, Dissertation Research Grants, or other grant programs with a training component that requires instruction in responsible conduct of research as noted in the Funding Opportunity Announcement.

Course Topics:

The course will cover all the following subject areas:

Guidelines Governing Research

- Policies regarding human subjects
- Live vertebrate animal subjects in research
- Safe laboratory practices
- Data acquisition and laboratory tools (including management, sharing and ownership)
- Responsible authorship and publication

Personal, Interpersonal, and Societal Issues

- Conflict of interest (personal, professional, and financial)
- Mentor/mentee responsibilities and relationships
- Collaborative research (including collaborations with industry)
- Peer review
- Research and scientific misconduct and policies for handling misconduct
- The scientist as a responsible member of society
Ethical Theory

- Contemporary ethical issues in biomedical research and the environmental and societal impacts of scientific research

Course Format and Content: Live Sessions, Online Learning, Case Discussion and a Reflective Essay

I. Live Sessions: Participants will attend 6 hours of formal lectures and case discussions, and 2 hours of in-depth round table-style case discussion with a panel of experts as detailed below.

**September 11, 3-5pm, A-250:**
*Investigative Oversight at the Federal Level: a View from the Director's Chair*
John Dahlberg, PhD
http://ori.hhs.gov/meet-directors

*Exploiting Text Similarity to Quantify Ethical Behavior: From Plagiarism to Double Dipping*
Harold “Skip” Garner, PhD
http://www.vbi.vt.edu/faculty/personal/Harold_Garner

**October 18, 3-5pm, A-250:**
*RetractionWatch: Tracking Retractions as a Window into the Scientific Process*
Ivan Oransky, MD and Adam Marcus
http://retractionwatch.wordpress.com

**November 25, 3-5pm, A-250:**
*The Anatomy of a Misconduct Investigation*
*Conflicting Messages on Conflicts of Interest*
Mary Simmerling, PhD
http://weill.cornell.edu/research/researcher/msimmerling/biography.html

**December 17, 3-5pm, A-950:**
In depth, Round-Table Discussion
*Ethics in the Academy Expert Panel Case Discussion*

II. Online instruction: Participants will complete an on-line portion of the course that includes instructional readings and topical case analysis through the CITI program, as well as an interactive video and case discussion “The Lab” available through the federal ORI website. Details appear below.

The CITI program online portion of the course is available by registering through the CITI site at https://www.citiprogram.org/Default.asp. Click “Register Here” on the login page. You will be redirected to:
https://www.citiprogram.org/enroll/courserегистration1.asp. Please select “Weill Cornell
Medical College” as your participating institution. After you complete the registration process, you should be able to select the “Responsible Conduct of Research, RCR” option and begin the online course training.

“The Lab” is an interactive video that explores a case of research misconduct. Through the simulation, you assume the role of a character. (You can choose among several different characters: a postdoctoral researcher, a graduate student, a principal investigator, and a research integrity officer.) In each segment, your character will be confronted with choices about how to handle issues related to potential research misconduct. Subsequent segments follow from previous choices you make as your character.

The video and related tutorial covers topics relevant to research misconduct such as the handling of data, mentorship, responsible research practices, and responsible authorship, among others. (Summarized from http://ori.hhs.gov/thelab)

Watch the interactive video independently or in a small group. Form small study groups to discuss the issues raised by the simulation. You can find a discussion guide to help you focus on central points at: http://ori.hhs.gov/TheLab/TheLabGuide.pdf

III. Reflective Essay Assignment:

Write a 1-2 page essay in which you present your thoughts about one of the following topics related to the responsible conduct of research:

1. The current federal regulations governing research misconduct define research misconduct as “fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results” (http://ori.hhs.gov/documents/42_cfr_parts_50_and_93_2005.pdf). Do you think this definition is adequate? Discuss why you do or do not believe it should be expanded to include other actions that seriously deviate from accepted scientific practices.

2. The federal Office for Research Integrity provides guidelines on the protection of whistleblowers at http://ori.hhs.gov/misconduct/Guidelines_Whistleblower.shtml As a practical matter, do you think that these guidelines are sufficient to protect whistleblowers? What do you think the challenges of protecting such whistleblowers would be?

3. Persons found guilty of research misconduct often face fairly standard administrative actions that are generally in effect for a period of 3 years. Some examples can be reviewed in the case summaries available at http://ori.hhs.gov/misconduct/cases/ Do you think these kinds of sanctions are sufficient and appropriate? Why or why not?
4. Harvard has been criticized for its handling of the Marc Hauser research misconduct case on a number of fronts:

http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2011/7/19/marc-hauser-resigns-psychology-harvard/


Do you think these criticisms are fair? What if anything do you think could or should have been done differently?