Research & Innovation
Research Governance Framework Factsheet

Research Misconduct

Research misconduct at any level is unacceptable.

- It is dishonest in itself and is therefore contrary to the core values of the NHS and the professionals working within it.
- It jeopardises scientific integrity, endangers patients and erodes the trust and confidence of the public in research, doctors, UH Bristol and the NHS.

The quality and safety of research at UH Bristol relies on the personal and scientific integrity of all those involved. The Research Governance Framework aims to:

- Enhance the ethical and scientific quality of research
- Promote good practice
- Reduce adverse incidents, ensuring that lessons are learned and
- Prevent poor performance and misconduct
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What research misconduct is not

Genuine mistakes, authentic scientific error and honest disagreements do not constitute research misconduct. However, it is wrong not to disclose such things where it is possible to do so and where they may be materially important to the interpretation of the research.

Misconduct in research and how to avoid it

- Always do an adequate search of existing literature before starting a new research project. This avoids duplication which wastes resources and the altruism of participants, without contributing new knowledge to medicine.
- Always make good efforts to publish the results of the research, but avoid 'redundant publication' i.e. rewriting the same result for publication in different places, as this distorts the impact of the research.
- The attribution of authorship on research papers should be fair and correspond to the amount contributed by each person in order. Gift authorship i.e. accepting authorship whilst having little or no involvement in the paper/research is unethical because it disregards and damages the concept of academic integrity. Named authors should have contributed significantly to the paper and must be sufficiently familiar with the research to defend publicly the results and methodology.
- Where work is the result of post hoc analyses, remember to include a declaration to this effect when submitting the paper
- When conducting research involving humans, their data or tissue samples, make sure that valid informed consent from participants has been given or justify not obtaining consent to a research ethics committee
- Always include data on side effects in publications of clinical trials. See International Conference on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use.

- Admit to missing or suspect data and report outlying data if they were not included in the analysis
- Make sure that written approval from the Research Ethics Committee and the Trust R&D Management Office have been received before the research begins
- Avoid plagiarism by fully attributing ideas, data or words taken from other sources to original authors. See International Committee of Medical Journal Editors – Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals.
- Never fabricate data or cases or wilfully falsify or distort data. These actions constitute serious professional misconduct.

Collective Responsibility for the Science and Ethics of Research at UH Bristol

If you suspect serious research misconduct then this should be brought to the attention of the Trust's Research Director or Chair of the Local Research Ethics Committee. The matter will be dealt with in a way which protects the person raising the concern and is also fair to the person who is the focus of it.

The sponsors of the research have an interest and a responsibility to monitor the research for ethical and scientific quality. Sponsors have powers to withdraw funding where serious misconduct is proved. Doctors are responsible to the General Medical Council for their professional conduct as researchers, as well as clinicians.

Useful Links

Wellcome Trust – Good Research Practice