

University of Mississippi Medical Center

Policy on Conduct of Research

(Faculty and Staff Handbook, July 1995)

The maintenance of high ethical standards in research is essential and an inherent responsibility of all members of the University of Mississippi Medical Center faculty and staff.

Validity and accuracy in the collection and reporting of data are basic to the scientific process; dishonesty in these endeavours runs counter to the very nature of research which pursues truth in the quest for new knowledge. Medical Center investigators are expected to strictly adhere to the principles which have long governed scientific research and to recognise that preservation of the public's trust and the institution's integrity is fundamental to the continuing productivity of biomedical research on this campus.

Procedure for Investigating Fraud in Research.

In an allegation of misconduct in research, the Medical Center will endeavour to protect the rights and reputation of all parties involved including the individual(s) who, in good faith, report(s) the perceived misconduct.

Misconduct in science includes 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. Misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation or judgements of data.

Initial reports of alleged research fraud should be brought to the attention of the faculty member responsible for the individual whose actions are in question. That person should in turn immediately report the allegation to the department chairperson and to the Office of Compliance.

If this initial report of misconduct is not deemed frivolous, the report should be referred promptly to the Dean of the appropriate Medical Center school or to the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs.

In all cases, the appropriate institutional party(ies) will complete the initial inquiries within 60 calendar days to determine if allegations are valid – or document the reason for any delays.

If the matter is referred to the Dean, the Dean will consult the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs who will initially review the allegation. If the allegation seems to have enough substance to warrant further investigation, the Vice Chancellor will notify the investigator(s) in question of the allegations and advise them: (1) he is notifying the sponsoring agency and/or grantor(s) that an investigation involving the possibility of scientific misconduct is underway; (2) that he is notifying the National Institutes of Health's Office of Scientific Integrity of the suspected misconduct if NIH sponsored research is in question and will also report the findings of the Institution's investigations to the OSI; and (3) that he is appointing a committee of senior faculty to thoroughly investigate the purported fraud and determine if the allegations have any basis in fact. The committee will begin the formal investigation within 30 calendar days and complete it within 120 days.

Throughout the committee's investigation, the individual and any collaborators or supervisors whose role in the alleged misconduct is questionable will be advised of the progress of the investigation and afforded the opportunity to respond and provide additional information to the committee.

If the committee's investigation substantiates the alleged fraud, the Vice chancellor for Health Affairs will notify the researcher's sponsoring agency of the finding's of the investigation. If it is deemed proper, appropriate restitution will be made to the sponsoring agency. All pending abstracts and papers resulting from the fraudulent research will be withdrawn, and journals in which previous abstracts and papers based on the work have appeared will be notified. Additionally, institutions and agencies with which the individual has been affiliated will be notified if there is reason to believe that the validity of previous research might be in question.

If the researcher involved is tenured, the committee's report will be referred to the Committee of Promotions and Tenure in the appropriate school. The committee will review the findings and recommend action to the appropriate dean and the Vice Chancellor.

If the investigator is not a tenured faculty member, the committee's findings will be reviewed by the investigator's supervisor, department head and the appropriate dean for disciplinary action which may include termination.

If the committee does not find that the alleged fraud is substantiated, the institution will make every effort to restore the reputation of the researcher(s) under investigation. In addition, appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination, will be taken against any parties whose involvement in making unfounded charges was either malicious or intentionally dishonest.