

## LETTERS

## TRANSPARENCY FOR EACH RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Institutions must also be accountable for research integrity

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Scientific misconduct includes serious breaches of integrity (fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism) and questionable research practices (failure to keep records, mismanagement of data, incomplete acknowledgment, and ghost/guest authorship). The need to ensure that the scientific community and the public have an accurate and complete record of research is increasing.<sup>1</sup>

The Singapore statement on research integrity, the first international guideline on integrity in research ([www.singaporestatement.org/](http://www.singaporestatement.org/)), puts primary responsibility with individual researchers. However, it states that “research institutions should create and sustain environments that encourage integrity through education, clear policies, and reasonable standards for advancement, while fostering work environments that support research integrity.”

The prevention of scientific misconduct is paramount. Doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers should be trained in research methods and ethics, and avoiding questionable research practice will primarily result in better results and more scope for scientific and personal achievement. Such training should be the responsibility of senior researchers in the context of appropriate institutional policies and strategies.

Unfortunately, research institutions are still mainly concerned with responding to allegations of misconduct. They are,

however, affected by individual researchers’ misconduct in that their reputation will be damaged and their attractiveness reduced to potential funders and partners in scientific research.

Prevention of misconduct and training in research integrity, targeting primarily young researchers, should therefore become a priority and will also meet ethical and social obligations and responsibilities.

An investigation of regulatory frameworks to ensure research integrity in the European Union showed that specific laws exist only in Denmark and Norway; many countries have multiple guidelines with little internal consensus or even no guidelines at all.<sup>2</sup> Much work thus remains to be done. Research institutions must take responsibility as their role is crucial in ensuring research integrity.

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Full response at [www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f4796/rrr/657254](http://www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f4796/rrr/657254).

- 1 Altman DG, Moher D. Declaration of transparency for each research article. *BMJ* 2013;347:f4796. (7 August.)
- 2 Godecharle S, Nemery B, Dierickx K. Guidance on research integrity: no union in Europe. *Lancet* 2013;381:1097-8.

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