

Initial Post

by [Jane Aldridge](#) - Sunday, 8 October 2023, 1:12 PM

In this case study Abi should be adhering to the ethics as defined by the British Computing Society (BCS, 2022) and also the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM, 2023). Both the BCS and the ACM have documented guidelines which programmers should be adhering to.

The ACM in section 1.2 states that the 'consequences of data aggregation and emergent properties of systems should be carefully analysed' (ACM, 2023). So the fact that Abi is concerned about how his analysis is going to be used is the correct professional approach.

Abi has a social responsibility to do the right thing, for the wellbeing of others, as stated by the ACM 'computing professionals should consider whether the results of their efforts will be used in socially responsible ways' (ACM, 2023). Section 1a of the BCS guidelines also states that its' members should have a 'due regard for the wellbeing of others'.

Vanclay et al (2013) states that professionalism must be underpinned by ethical practice, including the full reporting of methods. Section 3e of the BCS code (2022) states that professionals should not 'withhold information on the performance of products'. Section 1.3 of the ACM explains that computing professionals should be transparent and provide full disclosure of all system capabilities, limitations and potential problems. This is very important, Abi should be very transparent about the analysis, and the methods which were used to produce the results. Transparency would also include both the negative and positive aspects of the nutritional value of the cereal. Abi should document all the findings, risks and limitations of his analysis, and present these back to the manufacturer. There needs to be a documented audit trail of all the results. If the negative results of the project are 'ignored' by the manufacturer then the manufacturer risks reputational damage in the future and there could also be legal ramifications. The manufacturer will be regulated by the Food Standards Agency (FSA, 2023). One of the aims of the FSA is to ensure that food has a strong reputation for 'authenticity' in the UK and abroad (FSA, 2023). If the manufacturer isn't completely truthful about their product then they could be fined by the regulator.

Abi should be concerned that other correlations of the data show the product in a more favourable light. Abi should request that a peer reviews his analysis, or even better validates his work by re-doing the analysis from scratch. The results of this validation should also be documented, and presented back to the manufacturer, with the risks of taking the positive view of the product documented, and these would be reputational risk, regulatory risk and also financial risk, in terms of regulatory fines.

In summary if Abi clearly documents the methods used, all the results, and also the risks involved and limitations, and then also has his work validated by a peer, then he has upheld his professional responsibility. If the manufacturer uses this information incorrectly then it will be a very transparent decision that was made, to ignore the findings of the analysis, and if investigated then this misrepresentation

would be obvious. The BCS states that when in doubt seek advice, Abi should also discuss the project issues with his manager, and also seek peer advice (BCS, 2022). Abi should also raise his concerns with the compliance officer at his company.

References

Association for Computing Machinery (N.D.). ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Available from: <https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics>

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Vanclay, F., Baines, J., Taylor C. (2013) Principles for ethical research involving humans: ethical professional practice in impact assessment Part I. Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal 31(4): 243-253.