Collaborative Discussion 2: Summary Post (293 words)

Abi's situation presents a clear ethical challenge involving potential p-hacking—running a range of statistical tests to selectively report significant results that could benefit the Whizzz cereal company. As identified in the initial discussion, this practice undermines research integrity and constitutes a form of statistical manipulation. When faced with conflicting outcomes from the same dataset, ethical practice demands full transparency with the company, including disclosure of all results, methodologies, and explanations for discrepancies. While Abi bears primary responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of his analysis, both peer responses highlight that his ethical obligation extends beyond merely providing accurate data.

The first peer feedback correctly notes a critical gap in the initial analysis: Abi's responsibility does not end at data delivery. As outlined in the Menlo Report (Department of Homeland Security, 2012), particularly on the importance of identifying benefits and harms to society as a whole, Abi bears some responsibility for preventing the misuse of his work. The second feedback reinforces this by referencing the ACM Code of Ethics (2018), which emphasises honesty and transparency as fundamental principles for computing professionals. These ethical frameworks provide important guidance for navigating such dilemmas, particularly when consumer health information is involved.

Beyond reporting potential misconduct to regulators like the Food Standards Agency, Abi has several proactive options. He could engage directly with regulatory bodies to ensure ethical compliance, publish complete findings in an open-access journal to promote transparency, or formally document his concerns about selective reporting.

The legal and social implications are significant—misleading nutritional claims violate consumer protection regulations and damage public trust in research. As the second peer feedback emphasises, ethical integrity in statistical reporting is not merely a professional obligation but essential for maintaining scientific credibility and protecting consumers from potentially harmful misinformation.

References:

ACM (2018) ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. ACM. Available from: https://www.acm.org/code-of-ethics [Accessed 15 April 2025]

Department of Homeland Security (2012) The Menlo Report: Ethical principles guiding information and communication technology research. Department of Homeland Security. Available from: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CSD-MenloPrinciplesCORE-20120803_1.pdf [Accessed 15 April 2025]