

Unit 7 Collaborative Discussion 2

Case Study: Accuracy of Information

The case study presents Abi with ethical dilemmas: either manipulate data values to give a favourable outcome or show the data as discovered and allow the facts to speak for themselves. I often find this moral dilemma in today's capitalist society, whether in science or politics. Some underlying causes are psychological—lack of ethics or morality—potentially the fear of losing employment in academia, and even the need for a more excellent reputation.

Considering whether Abi must present both positive and negative analyses, I think the default stance should be that researchers are *not* obligated to give both views. This is because research takes time, costs money and may span several months or years. Though we can argue that adverse outcomes will surely become apparent during the study, thus allowing an opportunity to gather both views simultaneously. Still, presenting both analyses the chance of accusations, thus protecting researchers from potential legal action.

Abi is not responsible for others' research use and cannot be held liable. However, researchers who present results as positive, knowing the *truth* of the research is inherently harmful, must be held responsible for their research. Even more so based on the impact on society. For example, Macchiarini, a surgeon focused on building artificial trachea seeded with stem his patient's stem cells, was not open about his academic history (falsifying his resume and misrepresenting his work) and did not follow good research and medical standards (BMJ, 2022).

Suppose researchers act ethically and refuse to publish biased results, and the requesting organisation then publishes favourable results. In that case, researchers should consider any legal obligation or ethics board preventing them from publishing alternate results. If none exists and depending on the value of the research, then consider posting the alternate. However, ethics review boards may feel that the impact on institutional reputation forbids the organisation from remaining neutral and may abstain from research (Jacob and Foth, 2019).

References

- BMJ (2022). Disgraced surgeon Paolo Macchiarini convicted over experimental trachea surgery. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o1516>
- Jacob, J.D. & Foth, T. (2019). Conflicting interests: critiquing the place of “institutional reputation” in research ethics reviews. *Aporia*, 11(2):27-34.

Louët, S. (2016). Macchiarini Scandal: Overstepping the Research Ethics Mark. Available from <https://www.euroscientist.com/macchiarini-scandal-overstepping-research-ethics-mark/> [Accessed 27 July 2022]