"You suspect research misconduct. Now what?"

Overview of this session

In this session, learners will explore research misconduct. Learners will view a brief case study video and respond to questions related to the presented scenario.

Learning objectives

Through this case, learners will:
1) learn about research misconduct
2) learn about available resources regarding misconduct at the university

Lesson description

Instructional Event	Action		Time	Technology
	Instructor	**Learner**		
1. Introduce learning objectives	− Give an overview of this session − State learning objectives	− Listen and react to instructions − Recognize the necessity of this session	5 min	
2. Observe the case study	− Present the case study and review discussion questions with audience	− Watch the presentation and review discussion questions	1 min 57 sec	Internet capability
3. Talk about discussion questions	− Ask learners for feedback and discuss questions/topic − Facilitate discussion and provide answers	− Ask questions related to the case study − Share ideas or experiences related to discussion questions/ topic	~11 min	
4. Explain essential concepts that learners should know	− Summarize discussion points − Reiterate core concepts of session	− Listen	5 min	
5. Provide feedback	− Ask for feedback and address any remaining questions	− Ask anything related to this session	5 min	
6. Enhancing retention and transfer	− Provide additional materials including links to other resources	− Review additional materials as needed	2 min	

Overview of case study

A graduate student (GS) is confiding in a friend about a manuscript her lab recently published in a well-regarded journal. The GS is concerned because the image she contributed to the manuscript doesn't reflect the image she originally gave her PI. She thinks extra plaques have been added to the published image. The GS suspects someone altered the figure and believes her PI and postdoc in the lab (PD) might be to blame. The GS doesn't want to report the incident out of fear of ruining the lab's reputation but ultimately deems it is in her best interest to speak with someone at the university.

Discussion questions

1. **What should the GS do in this situation?**
   The GS should speak to someone at her university that is equipped to handle the situation, such as the ORI.

2. **What are possible outcomes?**
   Depending on the extensiveness of the falsification and to what degree it alters the paper, the lab may need to submit an erratum or issue a retraction. If this is an issue of true data falsification, the university will likely conduct its own inquiry/investigation into the alleged research misconduct and determine appropriate corrective action.

3. **Are the possible benefits of remaining silent greater than the potential fallout if someone else figures out that research misconduct occurred?**
   No, hiding falsification makes you complicit in unethical conduct and can ruin your career and reputation. It also has far-reaching implications for the scientific community at large.

4. **If you were in this situation, who would you talk to for advice or report your suspicions?**
   ORI or a trusted faculty member within the department or Chair.

Additional discussion prompts

- What advice would you have given to the GS about her current situation?
- How would you handle the situation if it happened to you? Would your opinion change if the manuscript had been accepted by a high-impact journal?

Additional resources

- UK's Research Misconduct and Reporting webpage: Research Misconduct | University of Kentucky Research (uky.edu)
- UK's Responsible Conduct of Research & Scholarly Activity webpage: https://www.research.uky.edu/responsible-conduct-research
- DHHS ORI's *Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research*: rcrintro.pdf (hhs.gov)
- UK's Good Research Practice Resource Center: https://www.research.uky.edu/good-research-practice-resource-center
- CITI RCR Course information: https://www.research.uky.edu/responsible-conduct-research/getting-started
- UK ORI's webpage: https://www.research.uky.edu/office-research-integrity