

# Policy Statement on Scientific Fraud and Misconduct

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Myeloma UK expects all researchers funded by Myeloma UK to exhibit impeccable scientific integrity and to adopt the highest achievable standards in the conduct of their research.

## Definition

[Medical Research Council 2008 via Wellcome Trust 2005 & 2002]

- Scientific misconduct means fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting results of research and deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviations from accepted practice in carrying out research.
- It includes failure to follow established protocols if this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to humans, other vertebrates or the environment and facilitating of misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others.
- It does not include honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or judgement in evaluating research methods or results or misconduct unrelated to the research process

## Dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct

- Allegations of scientific misconduct are rare. The scale of the research we support and the value of the grants we currently fund will limit exposure to financial risk. It cannot be assumed that 'unlikely' is the same as 'never'.
- Scientific misconduct and fraud is an assault on the integrity of science and the imperative is to protect the public interest. As certain types of misconduct may show intent, it can never be assumed to be a minor offence. It cannot be settled by a caution or a quiet word. It also requires expert knowledge, experience and infrastructure to resolve any complaints of scientific misconduct.
- Myeloma UK expects the academic authorities who hold the Research Award or Contract to investigate allegations in line with their own procedures. Myeloma UK will facilitate, as far as they are able, the rigorous application of an academic institution's expert investigation processes.
- As part of our responsibility to everyone who supports Myeloma UK's scientific and research endeavours, Myeloma UK will co-operate with all efforts to investigate them fully, press for this to happen where reasonable cause exists and share appropriate information with the relevant academic investigatory authorities. Myeloma UK has a role to manage reputational and financial risks when allegations of scientific misconduct emerge. The outcome of such investigations will be reported.

## Structure

- The Chief Executive of Myeloma UK, the Chair of the Board of Trustees (or delegated committee) are the Myeloma UK office holders with responsibility for responding to allegations of scientific misconduct. They may choose to give delegated authority to the Director of Research to carry out any necessary investigations and where appropriate make recommendations.
- Individuals reporting alleged misconduct to the charity are advised, in the first instance, to report observed, suspected or apparent scientific misconduct to any one of them. All information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality, only shared within this group of senior charity management.
- The two office holders are responsible for managing reputational and financial risks. They have responsibility for directing subsequent actions, with the following principles in mind:
  - In responding to an allegation of scientific misconduct Myeloma UK will take all reasonable action to safeguard the reputations of all four parties involved whilst the facts are being established – Myeloma UK; the subject (s) of the allegation; the source of the allegation; and the host academic institution with responsibility for taking the lead in investigations.
  - Myeloma UK will as far as it is able, ensure that investigations are carried out expeditiously and thoroughly.
  - Myeloma UK will respect confidentiality throughout due process and operate with appropriate openness and transparency once the investigation is complete. [It is not appropriate to be open with what turn out to be unfounded allegations].
  - Myeloma UK will also act in response to anyone who attempts to influence, victimise or intimidate the individual making the allegation of scientific misconduct that comes to their attention. Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 individuals raising bona fide concerns in the public interest can do so confidentially, without fear of suffering any detriment.

## Process

- Allegations of misconduct are likely to come to Myeloma UK's attention in one of three ways:
  - An allegation will be made directly to Myeloma UK by a third party either connected to the charity e.g. an employee, or Trustee; or through an external individual.
  - An allegation will be passed on from an external academic authority or establishment which has accommodated or is accommodating a Myeloma UK funded project, against which an allegation has been laid and is about to be, or is already being, investigated.
  - Very unusually, an admission may come from an individual coming forward claiming their own hitherto unsuspected misconduct. They should also have their claims examined by the relevant academic authorities, as there may be evidence of wider misconduct elsewhere or be evidence that there is a wider cultural problem in the conduct of research within an institution that needs investigation.

- Once an allegation is made, the responsible officers must consult promptly, and respond in a timely fashion by passing the allegation to the relevant University authorities in confidence, or by agreeing to share promptly all relevant documents or other evidence to facilitate a thorough investigation.

## Outcomes

- Under the Terms and Conditions of a research grant funded by Myeloma UK, if an allegation of scientific misconduct is upheld, Myeloma UK reserves the right to terminate the research award with immediate effect.
- If the host institution could reasonably have been expected to detect scientific misconduct significantly earlier, or had been in receipt of allegations previously that had not been adequately or promptly investigated, Myeloma UK may act to recover all research funds already spent on the fraudulent project.
- If the researcher is not guilty of scientific misconduct:
  - The Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Board of Trustees (or delegated committee) will assure themselves that appropriate publicity is given to this outcome where considered necessary.
  - In consultation with the host institution, the Chief Executive Officer will take steps to ensure that all reference to the matter is expunged from all personnel files and other records.
  - The Chief Executive Officer will secure confirmation from the host institution, that anyone who has been interviewed or otherwise informed of the allegations by them will be notified formally in writing that the allegations have been found to be without foundation.
  - Where investigation of any allegation has significantly disrupted a Myeloma UK research project this will be considered at the subsequent review of that work.
  - Where it appears that an allegation was not made in good faith, Myeloma UK will pursue disciplinary action against the person who made the allegation where they are connected to Myeloma UK; and by reporting external complainants to employers or to professional conduct panels as appropriate.

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