Food for Thought

“Yeah, but your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn’t stop to think if they should.”

—Dr. Ian Malcolm, Jurassic Park (1993)
http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0002031/quotes

CATS IRB is now live for use by researchers in the College of Health and Human Development, the College of Nursing, the College of Medicine and Hershey Medical Center. Hands-on training to help researchers learn the new IRB submission process and the PRAMS-to-CATS conversion requirements using CATS IRB have been scheduled. For dates and registration information about training opportunities, and to view an informational video about CATS IRB, see sites.psu.edu/catsirb

Social Responsibility and Research: Dual-Use Issues

Two papers published this month have added fuel to an important discussion about the social responsibilities of researchers. The discovery of a bacterial strain that produces a new botulism toxin, for which there is no known antitoxin, created a dilemma. Publication of these findings is an important part of the research process, leading the way for further work that could have significant impacts in treating human disease. On the other hand, the DNA sequence of the new toxin gene could be used to develop a bioweapon, and there is currently no antitoxin. In this case, the researchers voluntarily chose an unprecedented path: to publish their discovery without revealing the DNA sequence.1

The issue of how to handle research results that can be used for good or to cause harm arose during the early days of nuclear fission experiments. In recent years, advances in biotechnology, globalization, and communication have led to more urgent discussion about these dual-use research of concern (or DURC).2 There is currently no official policy or common standard governing how to handle research that raises DURC questions, but a number of cases are setting precedents and spurring discussion. In the majority of these cases, authors have exercised prepublication control voluntarily.

In an editorial that accompanies the botulism papers, David Relman states, “[f]or voluntary controls to play a useful role in the management of problematic information...scientists will first need to recognize their ethical and moral responsibilities to society in the pursuit of knowledge.”3 This is consistent with NIH’s action in 2010 to add “the scientist as a responsible member of society” to its list of core responsible conduct of research topics.4 Finally, as Mark Frankel stated last year, “We must educate graduates to be vitally concerned with not only how to apply their knowledge and skills, but also to consider the value of what they do for others.”5 Clearly, issues of social responsibility and dual use are timely topics for discussion and education.

References:
4 grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-10-019.html
5 sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2013_02_16/careedit.a1300016

To report concerns about research or scholarship at Penn State: Contact the Office for Research Protections (814) 865-1775; fax (814) 863-8699; email ORProtections@psu.edu; or call the Penn State Ethics and Compliance Hotline at 1-800-560-1637.
We present highly interactive workshops that explore in depth the many interesting aspects of single RCR cases, both current and historic.

**RCR in Focus**

 Shoot straight! Data fabrication and falsification in the gun debate*
 Brad Woods, PhD - Office for Research Protections
 March 5, 12 PM – 1:30 PM
 102 Kern Graduate Building

 Who’s on first? Guidance concerning collaboration and publication*
 Brad Woods, PhD - Office for Research Protections
 April 15, 12 PM – 1:30 PM
 102 Kern Graduate Building

*Pre-registration required at www.research.psu.edu/training

SARI@PSU and The Rock Ethics Institute are working together to make student participation certification available for Rock Ethics Institute events. The mission of the Rock Ethics Institute is to promote ethical awareness and inquiry across the University through a three-fold emphasis on teaching, research, and outreach. Seminars and workshops offered by the Rock Ethics Institute cover a wide range of topics, many of which may be appropriate for SARI@PSU graduate student education. Rock Ethics Institute events that are available for SARI@PSU participation will be announced on the ORP website (www.research.psu.edu/orp), and via the ORP Educational Events and SARI@PSU ANGEL listservs. Please contact sari@psu.edu to be added to our listservs.

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**Spring 2014 Educational Workshops**

http://www.research.psu.edu/training

**Scholarship and Research Ethics Brownbag Series**

12 PM – 1 PM, The Bennett Pierce Living Center (110 Henderson)

Bring your lunch; cookies and drinks provided! No pre-registration necessary, but come early as seminars fill up quickly.

Feb 6  “Core facilities, convergence and collaboration in research”
 Carlo Pantano - Distinguished Professor, Materials Science and Engineering

Feb 10  “The role of scientists as advocates for informed societal discourse”
 Michael Mann - Distinguished Professor, Meteorology

April 3  “Synthetic Biology: Learning the rules of life to solve problems”
 Howard Salis - Assistant Professor, Biological Engineering and Chemical Engineering

April 23 “Challenges of reporting unethical research conduct”
 Linda Trevino - Distinguished Professor, Smeal College of Business

**IRB 101 Brownbag Series:**

Workplace and Organizational Research

12 PM – 1 PM, 102 Kern Graduate Building

Bring your lunch; cookies and drinks provided! No pre-registration necessary, but come early as seminars fill up quickly.

Feb 5  “Collecting data in real-world organizations: Mistakes made and lessons learned”
 Sam Hunter - Assistant Professor, Psychology

Feb 12  “Sampling from under-researched workplace populations”
 Larry Martinez - Assistant Professor, School of Hospitality Management

April 2  “Ethnography as a research method for environmental health: The case of Angelica, an immigrant farmworker”
 Shedra Amy Snipes – Assistant Professor, Biobehavioral Health

April 9  “Benefits and challenges of conducting research in workplaces”
 Kelly Davis – Research Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Studies

**Survival Skills and Ethics Series**

For graduate students and postdoctoral fellows

For professional development only; SARI@PSU credit is NOT available.

*Pre-registration required at www.research.psu.edu/training

Feb 17  “Writing articles about your scientific research”
 Michael Alley - Associate Professor, Engineering Communication
 Bennett Pierce Living Center (110 Henderson) 10 AM – 2 PM*

Feb 21  “Presenting your scientific research”
 Michael Alley - Associate Professor, Engineering Communication
 Bennett Pierce Living Center (110 Henderson) 10 AM – 2 PM*

**The Rock Ethics Institute**

Be sure to check out events hosted by The Rock Ethics Institute! Information can be found at rockethics.psu.edu/events/

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**Contact the Office for Research Protections**

814-865-1775  www.research.psu.edu/orp

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This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its workforce. U.Ed. RES 14-19.  *Aegis definition from Thesaurus.com