

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE BUSY COORDINATOR

Mar 2022

Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) - Research Misconduct

Case Scenario

Dr Sally Yang, a research fellow in a Mental Research Institute, was working on a funded clinical research study on eating disorders. While Dr Sally Yang was analyzing the data, she found out that the result was not significant. Thus, she decided to change some of the data and submitted it for publication. The study was then audited by the Institute's auditor while the paper was under review by the journal. It was later found out by the auditor that multiple data did not tally with the source documents. Dr Sally Yang was interviewed and she admitted that she had amended the data.

What category of research misconduct does this fall under, and how should such a research misconduct event be reported?

Definition

"**Research misconduct** is defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Research misconduct, however, does not include honest error or differences of opinion."

- **Fabrication** refers to the deliberate making up of data or results and recording or reporting them.
- **Falsification** refers to the manipulation of research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.
- **Plagiarism** refers to the appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.

Dr. Sally Yang's case in the above scenario falls under the research misconduct of Falsification.

Reporting of Research Misconduct:

- i. The whistle-blower (the individual reporting the suspected research misconduct), should adhere to his/her institution's policies and/or guidelines for whistle-blowing.
- ii. The whistle-blower will report the event to the Mental Research Institute (the research/host institution where the alleged event occurred) via the RCR Event/RCR Research Misconduct Event Report Form.
- iii. Upon inquiry into the allegation by the research/host institution, an investigation will be conducted when there is sufficient evidence of research misconduct.
- iv. Once the investigation is completed, a copy of the report will be forwarded to the institutional official. The research / host institution will also notify the appropriate local research funding agency and OHRPP about the decision of the institutional official and if any corrective actions have been or are being taken.
- v. During an inquiry or investigation, if there is any immediate risk to public health or safety, the research activities should be suspended. If there may be violations of criminal or civil law, or if allegations are made public prematurely, the institution must notify the OHRPP & the relevant governmental and/or regulatory authorities immediately.

References:

1. NHG Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Manual, Chapter 2, Research Misconduct
2. Core Components of Responsible Conduct of Research
<https://www.research.nhg.com.sg/wps/wcm/connect/romp/nhgromp/06+conducting+research/rcr+core+components>
3. RCR Event/ RCR Research Misconduct Event Report Form for NHG Institutions maybe downloaded [here](#).

Article Contributed By: Jaclyn Ong, Senior CRC, IMH
Edited By: NHG Group Research, OHRPP

**Disclaimer: All characters appearing in this article are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons is purely coincidental. Best practices may differ between institutions. Readers are encouraged to follow their institution's policies/guidelines relating to the above scenarios/case study.*