

Research Misconduct Revealed in UK

A *BMJ* survey (16-1-12) revealed that over one in ten (13%) UK based scientists or doctors have witnessed that colleagues intentionally changed or fabricated data during their research in order to get published, whilst 6% of respondents reported they are aware of possible research misconduct at their institution, that has not been accurately investigated. The survey has already attracted more than 2,700 responses in one day.

According to the findings, research misconduct is thriving in the UK. The researchers point out that better strategies for deterring, detecting, and investigating research misconduct are needed.

The results also reflect earlier research amongst newly appointed consultants in seven UK hospitals, in which one in ten consultants stated they had first-hand knowledge of scientists or doctors who intentionally altered or faked data, with 6% admitting to past personal research misconduct.

The *BMJ* and the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) are hosting a high level meeting in London, at which the full results of the survey will be presented. The COPE aims to push for a consensus amongst institutions and funders, in order to tackle the misconduct in the UK. *BMJ* Editor in Chief, Dr Fiona Godlee, explained:

"While our survey can't provide a true estimate of how much research misconduct there is in the UK, it does show that there is a substantial number of cases and that UK institutions are failing to investigate adequately, if at all. The *BMJ* has been told of junior academics being advised to keep concerns to themselves to protect their careers, being bullied into not publishing their findings, or having their contracts terminated when they spoke out."

She continued saying that it is already a positive sign that solutions are already being aired ahead of the meeting, and that she is confident the meeting will prompt a united action from the research community, declaring that: "UK science and medicine deserve better. Doing nothing is not an option."

Dr. Elizabeth Wager, COPE Chair, added: "This survey chimes with our experience from COPE where we see many cases of institutions not co-operating with journals and failing to investigate research misconduct properly."