“Code of Conduct”

Professor Andrew Jennings
RMIT Code: extract

i. demonstrate integrity and professionalism;
ii. observe fairness and equity;
iii. demonstrate intellectual honesty;
iv. effectively and transparently manage conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest, and
v. ensure the safety and well being of those associated with the research.
RMIT code (summarised)

- Data must be retained, and be accessible to others in order to verify published work
- Authorship: authors must have contributed significantly to the work to be named as authors, there are no “honorary” authorships
- Publication of papers multiple times (in different locations) not permitted “An author who submits substantially similar work to more than one publisher must disclose this to the publishers at the time of submission.”
Examples of conflicts of interest in research include, but are not limited to, situations where:

i. the research is sponsored by a related body;

ii. the researcher or any related body may benefit, directly or indirectly, from any inappropriate dissemination of research results (including any delay in or restriction upon publication of such results);

iii. the researcher or a related body may benefit directly or indirectly, from the use of University resources, or
Typically ?

Peggy Fischer, National Scienc Foundation, US: (2001 figures)

Misconduct:

61% plagiarism 17% fabrication
11% falsification 11% other
UK “Sunday Times” report on MMR research case:

Brian Deer: the Lancet scandal

Following a Sunday Times investigation by Brian Deer, a leading medical journal was forced to retract fraudulent research by Andrew Wakefield which caused a global health crisis by linking a children's vaccine with autism

Part 2: The Channel 4 TV investigation | Part 3: How the autism link was fixed

Andrew Wakefield investigated: part 1 of 3
Research scandal revealed: When in February 1998 a former gut surgeon, Andrew Wakefield, and 12 associates at London's Royal Free medical school, published in the Lancet medical journal claims linking MMR with autism, it triggered a slump in immunization levels, outbreaks of infectious disease and public worry around the world

But Wakefield's key finding - a claimed time-link of just days between vaccination and autism - was a sham: laundering anonymized allegations for a planned lawsuit, which he had secretly been paid huge sums to back. The Sunday Times, February 2004

In this award-winning investigation for The Sunday Times, Brian Deer exposed Andrew Wakefield's fraudulent research, which unleashed epidemics of fear, guilt and infectious disease. When the investigation concluded in 2011, a Harris Poll found that in the United States alone nearly 145 million people knew Deer's key finding. Click here for a summary
MMR vaccine controversy

(From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

...publication in 1998 of a paper in the medical journal The Lancet which presented apparent evidence that autism spectrum disorders could be caused by the MMR vaccine, an immunization against measles, mumps and rubella.[1]
Investigations by Sunday Times journalist Brian Deer revealed that the lead author of the article, Andrew Wakefield, had *multiple undeclared conflicts of interest*,[2][3] had *manipulated evidence*,[4] and had broken other ethical codes. The Lancet paper was partially retracted in 2004 and fully retracted in 2010, and Wakefield was found guilty by the General Medical Council of serious professional misconduct in May 2010 and was struck off the Medical Register, meaning he could no longer practice as a doctor.[5] *The research was declared fraudulent in 2011 by the BMJ.*[6] The scientific consensus is that no evidence links the vaccine to the development of autism, and that the vaccine's benefits greatly outweigh its risks.
How bad does it get?

- Wakefield was funded by class action lawyers to conduct the research (not declared)
- He had a patent for a competing vaccine (not declared)
- He mistreated the children participating in the study.
- What should/would you do if you found yourself a part of this research project?
Responsible research practice
- overview for HDR student induction

Janet Kay
Principal Advisor, Research Integrity and Governance
Human ethics approval processes

- All negligible and low risk level research is reviewed and approved by the College Human Ethics Advisory Network (CHEAN)

- All research that is more than low risk goes to the RMIT Human Research Ethics Ethics Committee (HREC)

- Any research involving:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants
  - pregnant women
  - human tissue, “vulnerable” cases
Common problems with applications

- Not clear how and why project is being conducted
- Inadequate protection for participants and/or researcher
- Information sheet does not cover all relevant aspects
- Information sheet needs to be clearer
  - expression
  - what is expected of applicants, why selected, how long will it take, etc
Animal Ethics

- All research (& teaching) projects involving live animals need to be approved by an animal ethics committee.
- All procedures involving animals must be in accordance with the *Australian Code of practice for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* (the ‘Code’).
  - The focus of the Code is on researchers being committed to (taking personal responsibility for) animals’ wellbeing when planning and conducting their research.

[Australian code of practice](https://www.animalessentials.com.au/)
Animal Research Principles: The Three Rs

As part of respecting the contribution that animals make to research, and integral to the Code, are the Three Rs:

- **Replacement** – techniques that totally or partially replace animals with other methods should be sought and used wherever possible.

- **Reduction** - use as few animals as possible consistent with statistical & scientific validity.

- **Refinement** techniques & management so as to reduce pain and distress to the animals, including ensuring that techniques are performed by competent researchers and the most appropriate species has been selected for the study.
Role of Animal Ethics Committee

- Before a procedure or program of procedures can commence, AEC must approve:
  - the procedures and number of animals to be used
  - the premises (only in rooms listed on the Scientific Procedures Licence)
  - persons carrying out the procedures (must have sufficient experience in the technique or be trained by someone experienced)

and be satisfied as to the monitoring of the welfare of the animals, particularly pain and distress, at all stages
Animal ethics – further information

- Further information including some responses to FAQs (see Advice to those using animals in research or teaching) can be found on the Obtaining animal ethics approval website

- The Bureau of Animal Welfare Investigator guidelines for record keeping are a useful reference
Common problems with applications

- Poor lay summary
- Protocols poorly explained and poorly set out
- Numbers inadequately justified; calculations & numbers that don’t add up
- Inadequate justification for the work (benefits, alternatives)

**Recommended that first time applicants get assistance or mentoring from experienced AEC member before submitting application**