What You Need to Know about Research Misconduct
Columbia University | Office of Research Compliance and Training

What is Research Misconduct?
- Fabrication – making up data or results and recording or reporting them
- Falsification – manipulating 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 – the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit

What is not Research Misconduct?
- Honest Error
- Difference of opinion
- Authorship disputes
- Questionable research practices*

*Can still affect the integrity and quality of research

Who can Report Research Misconduct?
Anybody. Columbia has policies, protections and resources available for reporting research misconduct in good faith.

Where can Research Misconduct Occur?
Publications, presentations, posters, funding applications (funded or unfunded), theses, other reports of research results (including internal reports).

Who is Affected by Research Misconduct?
Everyone: research team, institution, research community, the public (taxpayers, patients), the overall credibility of research enterprise.

Research Misconduct Safeguards and Procedures**

Safeguards
As outlined in Columbia University’s Institutional Policy on Misconduct in Research, all parties must be treated fairly and reasonably. To the extent possible, knowledge about the identity of parties is limited to those who need to know and all materials and information shall be kept confidential.

Roles
Standing Committee on the Conduct of Research: EVPR-appointed standing committee that oversees research misconduct process
Ad Hoc Faculty Committees: Appointed by Standing Committee to conduct Inquiries and Investigations
Office of Research Compliance and Training: Staff all committees; support process
Research Integrity Officer: Institutional official responsible for compliance with federal research misconduct regulations

Key Stages Following Formal Allegation
1. Inquiry: Review Allegation and determine if Investigation is warranted
   - No investigation warranted
   - Case Dismissed
2. Investigation: formal examination of factual record. Resulting in either finding of Research Misconduct or dismissal of case
   - Finding of Research Misconduct?
   - Yes
   - Adjudication: Finding of Research Misconduct accepted, rejected or modified by EVPR
   - Appeal: Respondent may appeal to Provost

A finding of Research Misconduct must meet three prerequisites:
- There has been a significant departure from accepted practices in the relevant research community;
- Research Misconduct has been committed intentionally, knowingly or recklessly; and
- The Allegation is proven by a preponderance of the evidence.

Resources
- Office of Research Compliance & Training: https://researchcompliance.columbia.edu
- 24/7 Confidential Compliance Hotline: https://compliance.columbia.edu/hotline 866-627-3768
- Ombuds Office: https://ombuds.columbia.edu/
- Office of Research Integrity: https://ori.hhs.gov/

References:
https://ori.hhs.gov/definition-misconduct
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/vpaa/handbook/appendixc.html