• Include the subject’s comments in the record.
• Notify the funding agency (under some circumstances).”
• Maintain records.

Aspects of the academic environment that make investigations difficult:
• Decentralized authority, with the tenured professional the least accountable.
• Concepts of academic freedom and tenure.
• The “star” system, in which prominent researchers are treated as celebrities.
• A sense of collegiality that makes people unwilling to appear “noncollegial” by making a complaint.
• Gray areas in the norms.

Alan Price, Associate Director, Office of Research Integrity
ORI was created by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 1989 as the Office of Scientific Integrity. In 1992, it became an independent office in the Department of Health and Human Services and was renamed the Office of Research Integrity.

The office receives about 200 allegations every year, although for many of these, the ORI determines that it has no jurisdiction. In the last 10 years, the office has made 142 findings of scientific misconduct, 90% for falsification and fabrication of data and 10% for plagiarism. The findings are published on the ORI Web site and in its newsletter and annual report, on the PHS online Administrative Actions Bulletin Board, in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts, in the General Accounting Office debarment list, and elsewhere as appropriate.

The PHS actions may require various administrative measures, including retractions or corrections of the literature if necessary. Thus, 49 of the ORI cases have involved retractions and corrections of the literature as part of negotiated voluntary agreements. In those cases, ORI also tells the editor to expect a full description of the agreement within 30 days and, if it is not received, to contact ORI for the full report of the case.

Sometimes, an editor is reluctant to publish, because the respondent argues. For example, the respondent may claim that the data are inaccurate but the conclusions stand or may ask to publish new data to replace the old, invalid data. Other respondents threaten lawsuits against journals, claiming that they have been unfairly treated, or delay agreeing to a retraction until all authors sign off on it or the editor decides to proceed directly with the retraction.

PHS can debar researchers from receiving any federal funds for a specified period (typically 3 years, sometimes 5 or 10 years). It can impose a supervision plan over an investigator’s research or a certification plan over the reporting of the results for some period and prohibit the investigator from serving in study sections and other advisory capacities to the PHS.

Price summarized several completed misconduct cases involving editors and discussed how they had been resolved.

An investigation conducted by the University of California, San Francisco found that an author falsified data in a publication on AIDS research. According to the investigation, he selectively suppressed data that did not support his hypothesis and reported consistently positive data even though only one of four experiments had produced positive results. The falsified data were then used as the basis for a grant application to NIH. ORI concurred in the university’s finding. The researcher

Additional Resources on Scientific Misconduct and Journals

Policy Statements
• Council of Science Editors Editorial Policy on Journal Referral of Possible Misconduct (www.councilscienceeditors.org/services/draft_approved.cfm#ParagraphThree)
• International Committee of Medical Journal Editors Statement on Corrections, Retractions, and “Expressions of Concern” about Research Findings (www.icmje.org/index.html#correct)

Books and Chapters

Case Studies and Additional Resources
• Office of Research Integrity (ORI) Web site (ori.dhhs.gov)
• Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) Web site (www.publicationethics.org.uk)
• Links page on Web site of International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (www.iupap.org/working/ethics-resources.html)

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