Symposium
Misdirected allegations of breaches of research integrity

6th World Congress on Research Integrity

Hong Kong, 2-5 June 2019

F.R. Rosendaal
Leiden Committee on Scientific Integrity

LEIDEN UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER
Symposium programme

- An overview of procedures of investigations
  Prof. dr F.R. Rosendaal  Leiden University Medical Center

- Procedures on research integrity: a bird’s eye view
  Dr M.Y.H.G. Erkens  Faculty of Law, Leiden University

- A journalist's view: What makes a story a story?
  Dr I. Oransky  Retraction Watch, New York

- Panel discussion
Conflicts of interests

none
Credentials

• professor of Clinical Epidemiology in Leiden
  • research into cardiovascular disease

• chair of Committee on Scientific Integrity at Leiden University Medical Center and Leiden University

• member of Council of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)

• member of the Thematic Working Group on Research Integrity of the League of European Research Universities (LERU)

• for many years Editor of a scientific journal (J Thromb Haemost)
Scientific Integrity Investigation

• must be based on a code
  • a list of norms
  • people can only be held accountable for what they could have known to be wrong
  • can be by institute, national, or international

• must have procedural rules
  • a list of procedures
  • people should know how to complain, and what to expect as complainant or accused
  • committee should know what to do (and what not)
  • is usually institutional
But...

• a code does not cover everything
  • must sometimes be interpreted
  • can sometimes be stretched

• procedural rules
  • do not always fit reality
  • can vary between cases

• some uniformity seems desirable, and just
Never complain and never explain
Benjamin Disraeli
But some do complain... and complain...

De Dordtse wobber blijft toeslaan


Ingmar Vriesema  8 januari 2016

Dordrecht was gewaarschuild. Hij, Mustafa Karasahin, zou blijven strijden en nooit door de knieën gaan. Als de gemeente zijn huurpanden afpakt op grond van belachelijk strenge huurregels, moet hij zijn wobben afdwingen.

- ‘WOB’: Dutch Freedom of Information Act
- ‘Wobber’: neologism, someone who abuses it
- sent thousands
- city of Dordrecht spent several million euros in answering
- per 2016: restraining order with quotum of 2 per month
Procedures must be balanced and clear
• to give access for complainant
• to be fair to accused

But the balance can be disturbed by misuse
Survey on procedures

• workload

• composition of committee

• set of rules and procedures

• maximum time period for admissibility

• origin of complaints and anonymous complaints

• investigative freedom committee

• transparency of reporting by committee
• sent to LERU universities (n=23) and Dutch universities (n=14)
• response from 18

- Cambridge
- Oxford
- Lund
- Freiburg
- Geneva
- Leuven
- Leiden
- Utrecht
- Amsterdam (UoA)
- Amsterdam (Free University)
- Maastricht
- Rotterdam (Erasmus University)
- Nijmegen (Radboud University)
- Tilburg
- Twente
- Delft
- Eindhoven
- Wageningen
Workload per committee

• number of cases of breaches of scientific integrity
  • on average per year
  • admissible or not
  • founded or not
Workload per committee

- median number of cases 3 per year
- range 1 -20
Composition of committee

• fixed standing committee or ad hoc committee

• committee members
  • internal (employees of university)
  • external
Composition of committee

- Fixed
- Ad hoc
Composition of committee

- external sometimes mandatory, often optional
- external: emeriti, scientists from other institutions, others
Procedures

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www.organisatiegids.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/ul2staff/organisatiegids/klachtregeling-wetenschappelijke-integriteit-2018-eng.pdf
Is there a published set of procedures?

- yes
- no
Is there a time limit (‘statute of limitations’)
The complaint

• who can complain?
  • everyone?
  • only interested parties?
  • only employees?

• are anonymous complaints considered?

• can committee investigate without complaint?

• can committee collect information beyond that provided in complaint?
The complainant

- limited - everyone

- always - depends - never

anonymous complaints
The investigation vis a vis the complaint

complaintless investigation

• usually only by request of the board

inquisitory committee
Publication of report

• publication of the report
  • shows transparency about academic wrongdoing
  • may be educational
    • to scientists
    • to other committees
  • will evoke media-attention

• if non-anonymised
  • will warn future employers
  • will harm career(s)
Publication of report

- no
- anonymised
- with names