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# ORI's Mission

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Mission: To promote the integrity of PHS-supported extramural and intramural research programs

- Respond effectively to allegations of research misconduct
- Promote research integrity



# Assessing personal attributes contributing to committing research misconduct

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- The short answer is that ORI, and the scientific community as a whole, have not identified useful predictors to identify individuals likely to commit misconduct.
- On the other hand, we have some idea of what causes otherwise basically honest individuals to commit misconduct.



# A Major Caveat

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- My first thought in thinking about this panel was to focus on our “worst” respondents as a way of identifying people at risk in a research setting.
- However, our respondents behave badly **AFTER** being confronted with charges, and it is not clear if this behavior can be translated into predictors



## Another point

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- In many ways, ORI's most troublesome contacts are with a sub-set of the complainants who come to us with allegations, often without much, or any, foundation, and relentlessly pursue them.
- They are zealously motivated by anger, or belief that they are being little or no credit for ideas or data, and rarely respond to reason.
- More than a few are mentally unbalanced



# Some features of our “sociopathic” respondents

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- ❑ So wedded to a theory that the actual data is largely irrelevant
- ❑ Will insist on conducting a critical step in a procedure, even if seemingly trivial (a few of our respondents were the only scientist in the field able to successfully carry out a particular assay)
- ❑ Adds many co-authors to papers even when doing all of the work-often a loner
- ❑ Able to lie without effort
- ❑ In retrospect, there had been persistent, sub-threshold rumors (dishonesty, aggression, harassment, sabotage, angry outbursts, theft, etc.) not deemed serious enough to act on



# More general features of misconduct and thoughts on prevention

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## □ STRESS!!

- Major life events (marriage, divorce, illness, etc.)
- Internal or external pressure to succeed
- Need to complete a degree or generate data for a grant, top tier journal article, promotion, or a job elsewhere



# More causative factors

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- Poor record keeping
  - No institutional policy or laboratory guidelines on record keeping and retention
  - Increasing reliance on computerized records without adequate attention to regular backups and archiving
- Poor mentorship
  - Not regularly or never reviewing raw data
  - Lab chief too busy to provide guidance to junior scientists and students (travelling, writing grants, giving seminars, consulting, etc.)





# Prevention

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- Education and training in RCR will not eliminate misconduct completely
  - However, dealing with
    - Stressful events
    - Insistence on good record keeping
    - Review of original data on a regular basis
    - Providing good mentorship/supervision
- Can all play a significant role in reducing misconduct and other inappropriate behavior