

AFTERWORD

The intent of this conference on research integrity was to focus shared accountability for that integrity among members of the scientific community and the general public. The success of the conference was evidenced by the bountiful ideas and practical suggestions that emerged from convening a group of talented people, all interested in science and biomedical research, for an extended and lively two-day conversation. The uniqueness of the conference was exhibited by the manner in which this diverse group examined and debated such an emotionally charged topic as though they were a community of scholars searching for the truth.

During these two days, however, no single point of view captured the whole truth, but rather their collective points of view sketched a comprehensive and at times paradoxical view of what constitutes integrity in scientific research. The community of scholars context was so comprehensive that it included interested members of the scientifically-oriented and lay public who posed questions to the presenters and panelists and interacted with them during breaks and at meals. The entire gamut, from the theoretical to the entrepreneurial, was run as bench scientists interacted with pharmaceutical and biotechnology representatives.

While conference speakers and panel members framed the issues of research integrity within their own personal, professional, ethical, and social experience, the audience was treated to a varied approach to a unified goal, namely, answering the questions of why and how to establish and maintain integrity within scientific research. Indeed, to establish and maintain such research integrity is not only a lodestone but also a solemn obligation, if scientific results are going to continue to make a positive difference in the lives of all human beings. Thus, a continuing dialogue among and between scientists and those who benefit from biomedical discoveries is necessary to foster public trust.

If integrity in scientific research is going to prevail, it will depend on the professional, ethical, and social conduct of all those who are involved in discovery and its application. And as we realize that our future hinges on discovery and the application of new knowledge, we also know that it will be affected by the quality of the research that we do and by how we do it. Thus, we cannot permit our future to be held hostage by research that is anything less than honest, respectful, competent, and timely. To that end, this conference succeeded in exploring divergent and competing points of view that acquainted the various publics with the relevant issues surrounding research integrity, while simultaneously stimulating dialogue on the collective obligations of both scientists and the public alike. Only by aligning on this goal of defining and maintaining integrity in research can all of us help to ensure that research remains an ethical endeavor that contributes to the common good.