

## The Australian Society for Medical Research

4th May 2006

Project Officer – R Stilling Australian Code for the Responsible conduct of Research NHMRC Secretariat (MDP100) GPO Box 9848 Canberra ACT 2601

## RE: Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research

The Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) is the peak body representing health and medical researchers. In addition to direct membership, ASMR represents the sector through 42 affiliated professional societies and Medical Colleges, representing some 15,000 people actively involved in health and medical research in Australia. In addition, corporate and disease related foundation memberships bring a further 100,000 Australians with an interest in health and medical research into association with ASMR. Our mission is to foster excellence in Australian health and medical research, and to promote community understanding and support for health and medical research in Australia. ASMR achieves these goals through public, political and scientific advocacy. I am writing on behalf of ASMR Board to submit comments on the second consultation draft of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

We congratulate the Joint NHMRC/ARC/AVCC Working Group on the development of a document that clearly defines the responsibilities of Australian researchers and institutions in regards to the responsible conduct of research. The document provides advice on important issues in regards to responsible conduct of research; such as peer review, supervision, authorship and conflicts of interest. We agree that this document should be widely disseminated to researchers at every level as a clear articulation of practices for encouraging and maintaining responsible research conduct encouraging high standards of scientific integrity. Importantly, it sets guidelines to promote a culture of awareness and practice of responsible research conduct from the research trainee to the senior researcher.

We welcome the clear definition of research misconduct and the delineation of the process for handling allegations of research misconduct (Section 10). We consider that this section requires further refinement, for example, the code allows for two levels of response to allegations (an internal inquiry and/or an independent inquiry); we suggest that further guidance is required to help institutions decide whether the misconduct is serious enough to go to an independent enquiry for misconduct allegations. Although examples of research misconduct (Box 10.1) are clearly stated, it is unclear for which serious breaches an independent enquiry is required.

The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research will be a valuable cross-disciplinary tool for use by Australian researchers at all levels of academic and research organisations, in continued efforts to maintain and promote high standards of responsible research.

Please do not hesitate to contact ASMR if you require clarification in relation to our comments or any further information.

Yours truly,

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