



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 19:00 3 December 2014

Mechanisms for ensuring good research practice need to be sustained and strengthened

The UK Research Integrity Office welcomes the publication today of a report on *The Culture of Scientific Research in the UK* by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics. James Parry, Chief Executive of UKRIO, will be chairing the launch of the project's findings on Thursday 4th December at the Palace of Westminster.

UKRIO welcomes the evidence which this inquiry found, that scientists generally have high expectations of themselves and others, that they aspire to do rigorous, ethical work, and that they value the influence of guidelines such as *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.

However, the inquiry also reported a remarkably high level of concern about the pressure that scientists experience to focus on and report positive results, and how this could lead to corners being cut. Scientists were also highly concerned about inadvertent perverse incentives to fabricate data, alter, omit or manipulate data, or 'cherry pick' results.

Bernard Silverman, Chair of UKRIO, said: 'The evidence from this report confirms the view of UKRIO and others that it is essential that research institutions in the UK should provide strong leadership to build a research environment that supports researchers throughout their careers in striving for robust scientific design and high ethical standards. We look forward to exploring with the research community, funders and regulators how this might be taken forward.'

James Parry, Chief Executive of UKRIO, said: 'UKRIO has led the way in supporting research institutions in creating a culture and environment that minimise the opportunities and incentives for scientific misconduct. While basic standards can appear to be straightforward, putting them into practice can be more challenging. Reminding researchers and institutions of their responsibilities, and of the harm that failing to meet them can cause, is a long-term exercise, requiring strong leadership within the research community.'

- ENDS -

Notes for Editors

1. **The UK Research Integrity Office** (UKRIO) is an independent charity, offering support to the public, researchers and organisations to further good practice in academic, scientific and medical research. We promote integrity and high ethical standards in research, as well as robust and fair methods to address poor practice and misconduct. We pursue these aims through our publications on research practice, the support and services we provide to organisations, our education and training activities, and by providing expert guidance in response to requests for assistance. UKRIO covers all research sectors: higher education, the NHS, private sector organisations and charities - wherever the research affects the public good.
2. **For further information** please contact the UK Research Integrity Office, Sussex Innovation Centre, Science Park Square, Falmer BN1 9SB. Tel: +44 (0) 1273 234 697, email: info@ukrio.org, web: www.ukrio.org.
3. **About the project:** the Nuffield Council on Bioethics carried out inquiries on the ethical issues raised by emerging biotechnologies in 2011-12, and by novel neurotechnologies in 2012-13. These inquiries brought to light concerns about the ethical consequences of the culture of scientific research in terms of its potential to affect research practices and the quality and direction of science.

A detailed background paper which provides more information about the culture of scientific research in the UK will be available online once the embargo lifts: <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/project/research-culture/>

These concerns were shared by organisations that work closely with the scientific community, including the Royal Society, Society of Biology, Institute of Physics, Royal Society of Chemistry and Academy of Medical Sciences. Under the guidance of a Steering Group that included members of staff from these organisations, in October 2013 the Nuffield Council on Bioethics embarked upon a series of engagement activities that aimed:

...to foster constructive debate among all those involved in scientific research about the culture of research in the UK and its effect on ethical conduct in science and the quality, value and accessibility of research; and to advance current debate through wide dissemination of the outcomes of these discussions.

4. **The Nuffield Council on Bioethics** (<http://nuffieldbioethics.org/>) examines ethical issues raised by new developments in biology and medicine. Established by the Nuffield Foundation in 1991, the Council is an independent body, funded jointly by the Foundation, the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust. The Council has achieved an international reputation for addressing public concerns, and providing independent advice to assist policy makers and stimulate debate in bioethics.