Why Teach Research Ethics?

Description

A discussion for why it is necessary to teach ethics, part of the Instructor's Guide to Prepare Research Group Leaders as RCR Mentors.

Body

NOTES TO THE INSTRUCTOR:

- Having a conversation about the purpose for teaching research ethics at all is essential to identifying what should be done to meet those goals. Again, this should not be a lecture, but a conversation to identify goals that resonate with the participants.

Many who believe we should teach research ethics have a clear idea of why we should do so. However, even a moment's reflection reveals many possible motivations for such teaching. Based on a series of interviews with teachers of research ethics, the range of possible goals was numerous and diverse (Kalichman and Plemmons, 2007). And the many possible outcomes vary greatly along dimensions such as importance, feasibility, and measurability. An understanding of this range of possible goals is a precursor to making good choices about not only what might be done to teach research ethics, but what is worth doing.

Other than meeting federal, institutional, and/or departmental requirements for teaching research ethics, what should our goals be?

- *Enhance* public perception of the research community?

- **Protect** the interests and welfare of the human and animal subjects of research?
- **Improve** choices of research to be pursued and research outcomes?
- **Decrease** Research Misconduct?
- **Decrease** disputes and misunderstandings?
- **Increase** responsible conduct in research (RCR)?
- **Increase** knowledge about RCR?
- **Increase** moral or ethical decision-making skills? Other skills?
- **Increase** positive attitudes and disposition for RCR? Moral sensitivity?
- **Increase** conversations about these issues?

While these goals are clearly distinguishable from one another, there is also considerable overlap. For example, an intervention designed to increase knowledge might at the same time meet departmental requirements for teaching research ethics.

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Resource Type

Instructor Materials