Author's Commentary on "The Temporary Post-Doc"

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Phase 1

1. Johnson and Green should have informed Smith of their results and told him about the work they had submitted for publication as a matter of common courtesy. Although Smith's work may not have been significant, he was a member of the research group and should have been made aware of the group's progress. Furthermore, the confrontation in Phase 2 could have been avoided if all parties were more open with their findings and intentions.
2. Based on the information given in Phase 1, it is reasonable to believe that Smith should be listed in the acknowledgments at the end of the publication. Without evidence to support Smith's contribution, most referees would not accept listing Smith as a co-author.
3. As a rule, chemists analyze their data carefully before making claims regarding chemistry under investigation. In this example, Smith used very poor judgment, especially for a chemist with the level of experience of a post-doc. For Smith to make a legitimate claim, he would either need to explain the inconsistency in his data or repeat the experiments and obtain valid data. Since Smith took neither of these actions, he forfeited his claim of credit for the discovery.

Phase 2

1. To answer this question correctly, we would need detailed information about the research project and the extent to which Smith's idea represented a significant development. An argument could be made that perhaps this idea was only one of several of Smith's ideas about the reaction, and it turned out to be the right answer by chance. However, it is also true that Smith's

suggestion undoubtedly saved the group a lot of time and money. Ownership of an idea is sometimes not defined unless the idea has been published formally.

2. A patent lawyer could argue that it would be unethical to deprive Smith of any of the royalties because his idea led to the patented process. The lawyer might also argue that Smith should be allowed to file a separate patent on his idea and the process he had investigated. Thus, both parties would receive royalties, but Smith probably would receive a much smaller percentage than Johnson and Green.
3. If Smith were to repeat his experiments successfully, demonstrating that his previous claims were legitimate, it would resolve most of the conflicts mentioned in this case. However, Smith may not be willing to do so and may argue that his original work is enough to establish that his idea led to a solution. In a case such as this, a third, independent laboratory would most likely be asked to verify the results of both Smith's work and the work published by Johnson and Green. The results of the independent laboratory's tests would then be used to resolve the question of Smith's contribution.