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November 2024

TRAINING IN THE RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC), Weill Cornell Medical College (WCM), Rockefeller University (RU), and the Hospital for Special Surgery (HSS) collaborate to sponsor a biannual program in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) administered through the Research and Technology Management (RTM) Office at MSKCC to provide formal training in various aspects of research integrity. The goals of the RCR course are: 1) to heighten the awareness of trainees to ethical considerations relevant to the conduct of research; 2) to inform trainees of federal, state, and institutional policies, regulations and procedures applicable to the ethical conduct of research; 3) to provide trainees with the opportunity to discuss, in a relatively informal setting, with senior faculty and among their peers, the implications of these policies and procedures for their own behavior in a research environment.

Format: Participants are required to attend 4 in-person sessions (total 8 hours). These live sessions include both formal lectures from faculty members on RCR concepts and small group workshop sessions (composed of approximately 15 to 20 trainees) in which trainees and faculty members discuss practical case studies. In addition, participants must complete 9 online topic modules (total 9 hours). Each module includes a 10-question short answer exam. Participants are asked to complete a short pre-survey prior to the orientation and a post-survey after the conclusion of the last session to assess whether the course goals were met.

Subject Matter: Topics covered in the course include research misconduct (with whistle blowing and dispute resolution); data acquisition, management, analysis, sharing, and ownership; safe laboratory practices; animal welfare; use of human subjects; conflicts of interest and commitment; authorship and publication; peer review; collaboration and mentoring; safe research environment; reproducibility, replication, rigor and transparency in scientific research; and the scientist and social responsibility.

Duration of Instruction: The RCR course consists of a total of 17 hours of formal instruction, which includes the 4 in-person live sessions (total 8 hours) and 9 online topic modules with exams (total 9 hours).

Faculty Participation: Faculty participate in RCR instruction by giving formal lectures to trainees in the RCR course and by facilitating discussions during small group workshop sessions. Each semester, 20-30 different faculty members and mentors from a diverse range of departments directly participate in the formal RCR curriculum. It is felt that training toward responsible conduct of research is more effective as an ongoing activity integrated into the regular research activities of trainees. Therefore, the RTM Office also encourages faculty mentors to discuss and emphasize issues relevant to RCR in their daily contact with trainees in the laboratory. The RCR course director regularly discusses RCR concepts with faculty members to provide heightened awareness and sensitivity to these issues and ensure that they continue to be discussed with trainees.

Frequency of Instruction: The RCR course is offered twice per year in both the fall and spring semesters. Research trainees are required to take the RCR course at least once every four years and at the start of each career stage. All first-year graduate students, MD-PhD candidates, and postdoctoral researchers are required to complete the RCR course. In addition, individuals appointed to NIH-funded National Research Service Award Institutional Training Programs and other Career Development awards, as well as those named to projects funded by the NSF and other agencies that require RCR training must complete the course.

Prior RCR Training: *I completed the Responsible Conduct of Research Course in the fall of 2019 and received my certificate of completion in January 2020. To reinforce these concepts and meet requirements for the F31 award, I re-took the RCR course in the fall of 2023 and received my certificate of completion in December 2023.*

Plan for Continued RCR Training: *I will retake the RCR course at least once during each stage of my career as a scientist and at least once every four years, as dictated by NIH policy. In addition, I will continue to reinforce and reflect on concepts relevant to responsible conduct in research through regular informal discussions with faculty members and peers.*

Role of the Mentor: *During and after my participation in the RCR course in the fall of 2019 and the fall of 2023, I reviewed and discussed the material explored in the RCR course with my mentor Dr. XXX during our regular meetings. Moreover, anecdotes related to responsible conduct of research and ethics are frequent topics of discussion raised by Dr. XXX in our weekly lab meetings. My mentor Dr. XXX and I will continue to ensure that my research meets standards established for the responsible conduct of research through specific discussions of my data and how it is collected, documented, and communicated to the scientific community.*