

Retreat Offers Chance to Discuss Responses to Misconduct

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Chair, Education Committee

Informal group discussions of thought-provoking case studies made up much of the agenda at “The Journal’s Role in Scientific Misconduct”, the CSE educational retreat held 7-9 November 2003 with funding from the Office of Research Integrity (ORI). Planning the retreat was the main recent activity of the CSE Education Committee.

More than 70 editors, academics, researchers, and others attended the weekend retreat at the Lansdowne Resort and Conference Center in Virginia. Registration fees and the ORI grant ensured that the event was revenue-neutral.

In addition, the Sponsorship Committee, under the leadership of Devora Mitrany, raised money to fund five international editors who otherwise would not have been able to attend. The editors were chosen by the Education Committee from more than 40 applicants in a blinded competition; three were from India, one from Serbia, and one from China. A sixth editor, who is from Pakistan, was offered a scholarship but was unable to attend when she was refused a US visitor’s visa.

Joseph Martin, dean of the Harvard Faculty of Medicine, was scheduled to give the keynote address but was forced to cancel because of a colleague’s unexpected death. Instead, Catherine DeAngelis, editor of the *Journal of the American Medical*

Association, and Richard Horton, publisher and editor of *The Lancet*, opened the retreat by relating some of their experiences in handling cases of alleged scientific misconduct.

Recurring themes of the weekend included when editors should refer cases to authors’ academic institutions or funding agencies, how to handle misconduct claims about international authors with no obvious institutional or agency affiliations, how to obtain authors’ cooperation for retractions and corrections, and whether editors can—or should—share allegations with the editors of other journals. Those issues came up in the context of short case studies that were hashed out by small groups that then compared their solutions.

A variety of viewpoints were discussed in presentations and panel discussions throughout the weekend. Alan Price, associate director of the Division of Investigative Oversight at ORI, and Mary Scheetz, director of extramural programs at ORI, explained how their office investigates allegations and shared data selected from several hundred of their misconduct cases. Jim Kroll, head of administrative investigations at the National Science Foundation, provided a similar perspective on how the foundation



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handles such cases.

C K (Tina) Gunsalus, special counsel at the Office of the University Council of the University of Illinois, described how universities investigate scientific misconduct cases and how university investigations can sometimes be derailed by inexperience and such academic culture issues as an unwillingness to violate collegiality.

Harvey Marcovitch, syndications editor of the BMJ Publishing Group, shared some of his experiences and discussed the role of the UK Committee on Publication Ethics, which brings together editors for regular discussions of how to handle such cases. Martin Blume, editor-in-chief of the American Physical Society, spoke about some high-profile cases in the physical sciences. Sheldon Kotzin, executive editor of MEDLINE and chief of bibliographic services for the National Library of Medicine, explained how the library indexes retractions and corrections and links them with the original articles.

An unexpected bonus for the weekend was a lunar eclipse on Saturday evening, which was easy to see in the clear night sky of the rural area around the Lansdowne Resort.

Proceedings of the retreat are scheduled to appear in *Science Editor* and to be posted on the CSE Web site, www.CouncilScienceEditors.org.