

World Conference on Research Integrity: Fostering Responsible Research

Ana Marusic

Like avian flu, scientific misconduct has recently attracted global attention. It has done so with major cases of fraud that showed that, just as scientific research today is necessarily collaborative and international, scientific misconduct affects not only a single person or laboratory but often researchers across continents.

To address the rising global awareness of scientific misconduct, the European Science Foundation (ESF) and the US Office of Research Integrity (ORI), under the auspices of the Portuguese European Union Presidency and the European Commission, initiated and organized the first global conference on research integrity, held 16-19 September 2007 in Lisbon, Portugal. The chairs of the conference—Tony Mayer, of ESF in Strasbourg, France, and Nick Steneck, of ORI in Rockville, Maryland—succeeded in getting together stakeholders who have various roles in fostering responsible conduct of research and addressing scientific misconduct.

I cannot report on the entire conference, because it was divided into three parallel tracks that addressed three aspects of research integrity: policies and practices in investigating research misconduct, institutional and societal issues in research integrity, and the role of publications in fostering research integrity. Details of the conference are available at www.esf.org/conferences/researchintegrity, and an “action-oriented summary” by Peter Tindemans, of

ANA MARUSIC is editor-in-chief of the Croatian Medical Journal and president of the Council of Science Editors.

EuroScience, is available at www.esf.org/fileadmin/be_user/activities/research_conferences/Docs_NEW/2007/2007-242_Final_Report.pdf. Presentations and biographies of the speakers are available at www.esf.org/activities/esf-conferences/details/confdetail242/invited-papers-biographies.html.

Each day of the conference had one or more plenary sessions, which addressed different aspects of research integrity. We heard speakers representing many stakeholders and countries about their practices and specific problems. Sharing experiences, solutions, and strategies was the most important benefit of the conference. Although we came with different levels of knowledge and background about research integrity, as well as experience in handling scientific misconduct, the conference provided an open and tolerant forum for the exchange of ideas.

I am partial to editors' participation in the conference. Although I could not attend the other two tracks of parallel sessions and judge for myself, other participants told me that the publication track was the best organized and most stimulating part of the conference. The person responsible for that success was Sabine Kleinert, of *The Lancet*, vice-chair of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE). Kleinert, the editorial representative on the Conference Planning Committee, succeeded in making publication issues a focus of the conference.

The publication track explored the role of editors and their journals in responsible publication practices. Liz Wager, of COPE, introduced the subject of current best practices in scientific publication, including conflict of interest and trial registration.

Katrina Kelner, of *Science*, talked about the response of her journal to recent major fraud cases. Finally, Michael Rossner, executive director of the Rockefeller University Press, gave a well-researched and challenging talk about the role of journal editors in ensuring the integrity of research data. We also heard from other stakeholders in scientific publishing: Michael Farthing, of the University of London, UK, presented institutional perspectives on integrity in scientific publication; Chris Graf, of Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, talked about publishers' efforts to promote ethical publication; and Peteris Zilgalvis, of the European Commission, shared the concerns of, and offered possible solutions for, funders in ensuring responsible publishing of data. The third session of the publication track was dedicated to challenges faced by small journals. We heard about partnerships with African journals from Annette Flanagan, of *JAMA*, and Muza Gondwe, of the *Malawi Medical Journal*. I talked about small journals and the role of journal editors as educators in responsible research. Finally, Herbert Stegemann, of the World Association of Medical Editors, talked as the president of the Asociación de Editores de Revistas Biomédicas Venezolanas in Venezuela about the potential of local editors associations in promoting ethics in publication.

At the beginning of the conference, an important politician proclaimed in his address that we don't need any more rules for scientists. I hope that participants went home with the message that we have to know more about scientific misconduct and collect evidence on a global scale before we decide on strategies and actions. 🙏