

Scientific Integrity at Sentara Healthcare

Sentara Healthcare's values are People, Quality, Patient Safety, Service, and Integrity. In medicine, the values of quality and integrity mean adhering to scientific evidence. Scientific evidence is constantly changing, so living up to Sentara's values requires a commitment to continuing education and biomedical research. The research program at Sentara is committed to assuring honest and ethical research practices and the highest standards of scientific integrity.

Research is defined as a systematic investigation - including research development, testing and evaluation - designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Research is a knowledge-seeking enterprise independent of routine medical care and can include activities such as the conduct of clinical trials and the maintenance and analysis of research databases and tissue repositories.

Research involves data analysis and therefore is sometimes confused with quality improvement (QI). QI is a systematic data-driven activity designed to understand and improve care delivery in a particular healthcare setting. QI's goals are more immediate and local than that of research and are not meant to contribute to the fund of generalizable knowledge. Research has a formal protocol, specific objectives, a set of procedures, and is meant to add to theories, principles, meaningful connections, and other statements of

generalizable knowledge. Research activity goes beyond routine QI operations and has substantial additional legal and regulatory requirements.

Research is a systematic and orderly process that relies on trust. A successful research enterprise must cultivate an environment of trust that is committed to ethical standards and values, and to principles of scientific integrity. Sentara Healthcare recognizes its obligation to its patients, communities, and to society to foster a deep intrinsic commitment to scientific integrity among its research personnel. The Sentara Health Research Center defines the policies and standard operating procedures that will set expectations for scientific integrity at Sentara Healthcare. The Center will be a resource to guide researchers to adhere to responsible research practices.

Responsible research is conducted using properly designed, standardized, and transparent methods. Responsible researchers are truthful about the meaning, importance, and limitations of their results and conclusions. Responsible conduct of research demands proper and honest reporting in papers, oral or poster presentations, and social media. Biomedical research methods are typically learned in an apprentice learning model and researchers are expected to be responsible mentors and supervisors to junior researchers. All of these

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research activities must be guided by the practices that are in accordance with the norms of responsible conduct of research.

Research misconduct causes harm to patients, institutions, and society. Research misconduct undermines the trust in individual investigators and in healthcare institutions. Research misconduct does not mean honest error or difference of opinion. Research misconduct is dishonest or self-serving behavior, and this is incompatible with Sentara's values of integrity and service.

Research misconduct includes data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. It also includes unwarranted destruction of data, improper reporting, invalid authorship, redundant publication, undue outside interference, mismanagement of conflict of interest, biased analysis and reporting, censorship, mismanagement of funding, inadequate procedural or informational security, and breaches of confidentiality in research or in peer review.

Scientific communities are responsible for educating, self-policing, and assuring compliance with responsible conduct of research. At Sentara, all researchers are expected to undergo periodic training using the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program. Methods of self-policing and assurance of scientific

integrity include procedures for reporting allegations of misconduct, and processes for investigation, oversight, adjudication, corrective actions, and sanctions. Allegations of research misconduct may be reported to the Sentara Health Research Center through the Research Integrity Office or the Center's Senior Medical Director 757-252-3281.

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