Preamble

The researchers’ honesty and integrity are a prerequisite for research work. Good research practice must be taught and practiced. The following rules for good research practice are intended to help promote the quality of research work and prevent scientific misconduct.

With this objective and based on guidelines by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and Leibnitz-Gemeinschaft (Leibniz Association), the Executive Board of the Stiftung Regensburger Centrum für Interventionelle Immunologie (RCI, Regensburg Center for Interventional Immunology) – after consulting with RCI researchers – issues the following Rules of Procedure for Safeguarding Good Research Practice.

I. Safeguarding Good Research Practice

§ 1

General

(1) Research publications are the product of the work of RCI staff. Quality and originality of work always take precedence over quantity in performance and evaluation criteria for awarding academic degrees, and in terms of promotion, recruitment, appointment, and allocation of funds.

(2) Research must be carried out in accordance with up-to-date knowledge. Knowledge of the current literature and appropriate methods is therefore imperative. Continuous quality assurance must be applied during research. Discipline-related recognized principles of research must be observed. Ethical standards must be observed when conducting experiments. Rights and obligations, arising in particular from legal requirements, but also from contracts with third parties, must be taken into account. Where necessary, permits and ethics approvals must be obtained and submitted. Regarding research projects, potential consequences of the research should be thoroughly evaluated and the respective ethical aspects assessed.
(3) Research work should be reproducible and workflows comprehensible to others. All findings must be consistently questioned. Prior to publication, a mutual critical review of the work is mandatory. For this purpose, primary data and interim results shall be made available to others. Software programmed by researchers themselves shall be made publicly available along with the source code.

(4) Materials and methods used as well as results, including primary data, must be documented and kept for a period of ten years, unless other rules and regulations require a longer archiving period. Should an employee responsible for research work resign from the institute, research documents must be handed over to his/her supervisor. This includes, but is not limited to, all written and electronic records, reports, protocols, algorithms, software code, calculations, data, and presentations. When leaving RCI, it is permitted to make and take along copies of one’s own laboratory notebooks.

(5) Peer-review activities must be carried out in a confidential and competent manner. Any bias must be disclosed. If any peer-review activity is fully delegated, this must be communicated to the person who commissioned the peer review in writing.

(6) Strict honesty with regard to identifying contributions by participants must be maintained.

(7) Researchers should cooperate in a responsible manner. Management tasks must be carried out responsibly.

(8) In all publications, the intellectual authorship of others must be respected, and all quotations and adoptions must be properly identified.

§ 2
Teaching, Training and Obligations

(1) At the beginning of their research work at RCI, employees must be informed about the rules of good research practice and their obligation to comply with them must be recorded. This instruction and commitment shall be repeated annually. The obligation to comply with the rules of good research practice is included in any employment contract with RCI.

(2) The rules of good research practice and these Rules of Procedure are an integral part of teaching and training junior scientists at RCI; this also applies to taking on teaching obligations at institutions of higher education. RCI staff responsible for Bachelor and Master students as well as doctoral candidates instruct the students on the rules of good research practice and oblige the students to comply with them.

§ 3
Design of Structural Units and Project Groups

(1) Within their area of responsibility, heads of structural units (departments, research groups, junior research groups, cross-sectional institutes, associated groups) and project groups have the following duties:
- defining research priorities,
- defining responsibilities, workflows, and their monitoring,
- preparing work programmes for doctoral candidates, Bachelor and Master students and providing guidance on research work,
- conducting regular laboratory meetings with reports from the scientific staff, doctoral candidates, Bachelor and Master students.

Research and technical staff, doctoral candidates, as well as bachelor and master students are only allowed to pass on methods and results to third parties with the express approval of the head of the relevant structural unit or project group.

(2) In all matters concerning the research objective, publication or utilization of research results, members of a structural unit or project group are subject to the instructions of the head of the structural unit or project group. The heads of the structural unit or project group are subject to the instructions of RCI’s Executive Board.

§ 4
Authorship of Research Publications

(1) If more than one person is involved in a research paper or in drafting a research report, only those who have made an essential contribution to the issue, the research plan, the implementation of the research work, the evaluation or interpretation of the results as well as to the design, or the critical revision of the manuscript’s content may be mentioned as co-author. This also includes the scientific guidance of staff members of the structural unit. Any “honorary authorship” is excluded.

(2) If a co-author feels that he or she has been passed over, he or she can call upon the ombudsperson according to §§ 8, 9. Co-authorship cannot be justified by only technical participation in the collection of data, nor by providing financial resources only or by the general management of the structural unit in which the research was carried out. The same applies to merely reading the manuscript without co-designing the contents.

(3) If unpublished observations or data of other persons are quoted in the manuscript or if observations or data of other institutions are used, their written consent is required.

(4) All employee manuscripts and data intended for publication must be presented to the head of the structural unit prior to submission or dissemination. The publication medium shall be carefully selected, taking into account its quality and visibility in the respective field of discourse.
(5) Heads of structural units shall check all data intended for publication for the existence of any inventions. They are encouraged to consult with the institute’s patent department regarding such matters. The existence of inventions obliges the inventors to submit a Notice of Invention to the Executive Board.

(6) Prior to submission, the head of the structural unit or the corresponding author is responsible for presenting the final manuscript to all co-authors. This also applies to resubmission after revision or resubmission to another publication medium.

(7) Prior to submission, the head of the structural unit or the corresponding author must obtain a written release of the manuscript from RCI’s Executive Board. This does not apply to posters and presentations.

(8) By agreeing with being designated a co-author, the co-author assumes shared responsibility for the fact that the co-authored publication complies with scientific standards. This is particularly true for the area to which a co-author has contributed; he or she is responsible for both the correctness of his or her own contribution as well as for ensuring that it is included in the publication in a scientifically correct manner. The corresponding authors are responsible for the main statements of the publication.

§ 5
Junior Researchers

(1) With their bachelor, master and/or doctoral thesis junior researchers begin working scientifically. In addition to technical skills, RCI's staff members must equip them with fundamental ethical principles for research work and teach them responsible treatment of results and cooperation with other researchers.

(2) Junior researchers are entitled to regular scientific supervision, advice, and support from the head of the structural unit or project group.

(3) Bachelor, Master and PhD students have the same rights and obligations to safeguard good research practice mentioned in these Rules of Procedure as the other researchers. They must be committed to comply with the principles of good research practice mentioned in § 1. They are required to be collegial, to regularly report on the progress of their research, to participate in internal seminars and, to a limited extent, to participate in routine tasks within the structural unit or project group.
II. Procedure for Dealing with Scientific Misconduct

§ 6

Scientific Misconduct

(1) If researchers deliberately and intentionally or through gross negligence make false statements in the field of science, violate the intellectual property of others, or seriously impair their research activities, this constitutes scientific misconduct. This also applies to technical employees.

(2) In particular misrepresentation is considered to be misconduct, such as:
   - fabrication of data,
   - falsification of data, diagrams, or illustrations,
   - selection and rejection of undesirable findings without disclosure,
   - manipulation of test results (e.g. by deliberately creating test conditions, which were special, but were not disclosed),
   - incorrect information in an application or application for funding (including false information on the publication medium and on the publications accepted or in print),
   - multiple publication of data or texts without disclosure.

(3) Misconduct also includes the infringement of intellectual property regarding a work created by a third party and protected by copyright; it also includes the infringement of intellectual property regarding material scientific findings, hypotheses, theories or research approaches from others, arising from:
   - unauthorised use under the pretence of authorship (plagiarism),
   - use of research approaches and ideas of others without reference to the source, in particular as an expert and/or peer reviewer (theft of ideas),
   - claim or acceptance of unjustified scientific authorship or co-authorship, as well as refusal of legitimate co-authorship toward the co-author,
   - falsification of content,
   - unauthorised publication and unauthorised provision to third parties, before the work, finding, hypothesis, theory or research approach has been lawfully published.

(4) Misconduct also includes:
   - breach of trust in the case of peer-review activity or as a supervisor as well as violation of § 1 (5),
   - violation of the publication rules (§ 4), in particular § 4 (4) and § 4 (7),
   - violation of the obligation to back up data according to § 1 (4). This also applies to the unlawful non-elimination of (in particular personal) data,
   - serious impairment of research activities, including damage, destruction or manipulation of experimental arrangements, equipment, documents, hardware, software, chemicals or other items required by another person to carry out research work,
   - deliberate alteration or removal of data records,
   - intentionally rendering scientifically relevant information carriers useless.
§ 7
Co-responsibility for Misconduct

(1) Co-responsibility for misconduct within the meaning of § 6 may also arise from:
- active participation in the misconduct of others,
- knowledge of falsification by others,
- co-authorship in publications affected by deliberate falsification
- gross neglect of supervisory duties.

§ 8
Procedure for Dealing with Allegations of Scientific Misconduct

(1) The procedure for dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct begins with reporting a suspicion (§ 9) and is carried out by the ombudspersons (§ 10), and if necessary by a Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct (§§ 11-13) and RCI’s Executive Board (§ 14).

(2) RCI employees are obliged to cooperate upon request.

(3) This procedure does not replace other procedures governed by laws or bylaws.

§ 9
Reporting a Suspicion

(1) If individual RCI researchers have a specific suspicion of scientific misconduct, they must immediately inform an ombudsperson (§ 10) by reporting a suspicion.

(2) Any suspicion should be reported in writing, stating incriminating facts and evidence.

(3) The ombudsperson shall inform the person concerned and examine the allegations maintaining confidentiality and the presumption of innocence. If these allegations cannot be disproved, at the request of the ombudsperson investigations will be carried out in the structural units concerned by the unit itself. All employees of the structural unit concerned are obliged to cooperate. The result or the results of the investigation must be written up in a statement, if necessary various ones, and presented to the ombudsperson within 4 weeks.

(4) If the allegations cannot be disproved in the course of the investigations mentioned in § 9 (3), the ombudsperson shall apply to the Executive Board for the formation of a Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct pursuant to § 11 (1).
(5) Should the ombudsperson decide in the course of the procedure that further investigation of the allegation is necessary, the matter shall be forwarded to the central ombudsperson of the DFG or – if members or staff of the University of Regensburg are involved – to a person of trust from the University of Regensburg.

(6) Confidentiality must be maintained to protect informants and persons concerned. Without the informants’ express consent their names may not be disclosed to the persons concerned during this phase of the procedure; this does not exclude a mutually agreed to confrontation.

§ 10
Ombudspersons

(1) The RCI shall appoint two ombudspersons as contact persons for RCI employees who have allegations of scientific misconduct to be raised. These two ombudspersons work together, and each has sole power of representation.

(2) The ombudspersons appointed are researchers who have an employment relationship with the RCI and have long-term experience in the scientific field as well as national and international contacts.

(3) The appointment is made by RCI’s Executive Board after consultation with the Board of Directors. The term of office is three years, a one-time reappointment is possible.

(4) Name and contact details of the appointed ombudspersons are published on the RCI website (www.rcii.de).

(5) The ombudsperson has the following duties:
- As a person of trust, he/she shall advise those RCI employees who inform him/her about scientific misconduct as defined in § 6.
- He/she shall check whether the allegations are sufficiently concrete and significant to be plausible as well as whether there are sufficient potential motives; he/she shall clarify whether it is possible to disprove the allegations.
- If the allegations cannot be disproved, the ombudsperson shall apply to the Executive Board for the formation of a Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct (§ 11) and shall inform the heads of the structural units concerned.
- The ombudsperson is obliged to document his or her actions, taking into account the personal privacy rights of the informants and persons concerned.

(6) Every RCI employee is entitled to speak personally to an ombudsperson within a short period of time.

(7) In the event that the ombudsperson is biased or unavailable, the other ombudsperson will act as a substitute, and vice versa.
§ 11
Appointment of the Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct

(1) After consultation with the heads of the structural units, the Executive Board shall appoint a Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct on an ad hoc basis.

(2) The committee is composed of:
   - three researchers,
   - the ombudspersons as guests in an advisory capacity.

(3) The committee shall act at the request of the ombudsperson or one of the committee members.

§ 12
Procedure of the Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct

(1) The committee shall elect a chairperson and a deputy chairperson. The chairperson or, if the chairperson is indisposed, the deputy chairperson, invites members to the committee meetings, chairs the meetings and implements the committee’s resolutions.

(2) The committee has a quorum if at least two members or deputy members are present. The committee decides by simple majority. Minutes of the committee meetings shall be taken and shall record the main results of the meetings.

(3) The committee may bring in other persons in an advisory capacity.

(4) The committee shall organise its work in a manner that ensures a speedy procedure.

§ 13
Duties of the Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct

(1) The committee shall be made aware of the results of the investigation pursuant to § 9 (3) by the ombudsperson and decide on the further procedure. The Committee may discontinue the procedure, in particular upon a justified request by the informant, or in may initiate further investigation or submit a recommendation for a decision to the Executive Board.

(2) The committee does not deliberate in public.

(3) The persons concerned must be heard at their request. For this purpose, they may each involve a person of trust as an advisor. The same applies to other persons to be heard.
(4) The committee may inform the persons concerned about the names of the informants. The informant must be notified in advance of this disclosure.

(5) If the committee considers scientific misconduct to be proven, it shall report to RCI’s Executive Board on the result of its investigation in writing and suggest how the procedure should be continued, also with regard to the protection of the rights of others. This report shall also be made available to the persons concerned and the informants.

(6) The files are to be archived for 10 years.

(7) Informants must be protected against any discrimination. Intentional false allegations may be subject to disciplinary action under employment law.

§ 14

Executive Board Decisions

(1) The Executive Board reviews committee recommendations on sanctions for scientific misconduct and decides on the further course of action. The Executive Board informs the Committee for the Examination of Scientific Misconduct about this decision.

(2) If the person or persons concerned is/are employed by the RCI, the following disciplinary actions under employment law may apply in case of scientific misconduct:
   1. warning letter,
   2. dismissal for exceptional reasons (including dismissal on grounds of suspicion),
   3. routine dismissal,
   4. notice of termination of contract.

(3) The following consequences under civil law may apply in case of scientific misconduct:
   1. ban from entering the premises,
   2. claims for restitution against persons concerned (for example with regard to stolen material),
   3. claims for removal or elimination as well as injunction relief arising from copyright, personality rights, patent law and competition law,
   4. claims for restitution (for instance of grants, scholarships or third-party funds),
   5. claims for damages by the RCI or third parties in the event of personal injury, damage to property and so forth.

(4) The Executive Board may hand over the procedure to the relevant institution of higher education for the execution of academic consequences.

(5) In the event of criminal misconduct, the Executive Board shall report the offence.

(6) If the suspicion of scientific misconduct has been wrongly raised, the Executive Board shall ensure the rehabilitation of the person(s) concerned.
Regensburg, 23 January 2020

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