

Publication

Researchers' interpretations of research integrity: A qualitative study

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Despite increasing interest in integrity issues, relatively few studies have examined researchers' own interpretations of integrity. As part of the Perspectives on Research Integrity in Science and Medicine (PRISM) project, we sought to explore how researchers themselves define research integrity. We conducted 33 semi-structured interviews with clinical and laboratory-based researchers from across Switzerland. Data were transcribed and coded using thematic analysis and illustrative quotes were selected. Researchers defined integrity in terms of honesty, transparency, and objectivity, and generally stressed the importance of sticking to the research question and avoiding bias in data interpretation. Some saw research integrity as being synonymous with scientific integrity, but others regarded research integrity as being a subset of the wider domain of scientific integrity. A few participants equated research integrity with mere absence of misconduct, but the majority of participants regarded integrity as being more than this. Researchers regarded truth as the key aspect of integrity, though they expressed this in different ways and with various emphases on honesty, transparency, and objectivity. Integrity goes beyond avoiding misconduct, and scientific integrity has a wider domain than research integrity.

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