

Report on Research Compliance Volume 18, Number 5. April 22, 2021 NIH's Lauer: 'This Is Not Just a Matter of Bad Apples'

By Theresa Defino

In mid-April, members of NIH's "integrity team" met to discuss active cases involving what Michael Lauer, deputy director for extramural research, terms "classic misconduct" (fabrication, falsification and plagiarism), but also foreign interference and harassment, which can include allegations of sexual harassment as well as racial discrimination. Members meet every several weeks, he said. Additionally, NIH is investigating cases of peer reviewers violating confidentiality.

NIH is concerned about all of these kinds of cases, as each poses a risk to the responsible conduct of research, and potentially could lead to real harm when fraudulent data are mistakenly accepted as true in both clinical practice and among members of the public, Lauer said.

Lauer's remarks were part of his closing day keynote address at a conference^[1] organized by the Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research at Northwell Health, "Driving Responsible Conduct of Research During a Pandemic," which was supported by the HHS Office of Research Integrity. Another session explored how research administrators have been handling the transition to remote operations and other challenges resulting from the pandemic.^[2]

In his presentation, Lauer reminded audience members that NIH makes awards to institutions, not directly to principal investigators (PIs). Lauer showed an excerpt from a 2019 paper^[3] that he said reflected "the way we think at NIH."

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