Responsible Conduct of Research and Rigor & Reproducibility

A regular quarterly series of interactive workshops in the “Ethical Conduct of Research” is held on a Friday afternoon three times per year and is hosted by the Postdoctoral Association (PDA) in the Biological Sciences Division (BSD) at the University of Chicago. It often features real case studies from the University of Chicago or elsewhere while maintaining confidentiality. These workshops cover all the NIH-required topics including authorship and data ownership, fraud and misconduct, ethics of animal research, human subject research, and conflicts of interest. University Faculty, University Research Administration, the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, a lawyer from the Office of Legal Counsel, the Director of Academic Affairs, and the Dean and Director for Postdoctoral Affairs, present these workshops. Recent sessions include a discussion of publishing ethics, led by a Senior Editor of a Cell Press journal, and a discussion of ethical conduct in animal research, led by the UChicago Animal Resources Center. The most recent session discussed the aspects of working in an intercultural research environment, led by the Postdoc Academy.

At present, the annual series is required of all postdoc trainees on T32, F32s and K-awards and strongly recommended for other postdocs. Attendance is recorded. This ethics series is specifically designed for postdocs, and is presented at a more sophisticated level than the graduate student courses. Each session lasts 1.5 hours with discussion led by a faculty member, core director, or other senior administrator. We also conduct anonymous surveys of postdocs on their ethical concerns which we will address in subsequent sessions. These workshops are designed to provide at least 4 hours of RCR instruction/year, satisfying the RCR requirement of 8 hours over the course of 2 years.

In addition, the “Summer Series on Scientific Integrity and the Ethical Conduct of Research,” sponsored by the Institute for Translational Medicine and Dr. Julian Solway, is available every year and is open to postdoctoral scholars and fellows. (Information can be found here: <https://chicagoitm.org/itm-university-of-chicago-researcher-education/>). These seminars are every Tuesday afternoon in July and August and cover topics relevant to translational and clinical research such as humane treatment of animals, ethics of human experimentation and vulnerable populations and groups at risk, providing 10 hours of in-person training yearly.