



Supervision of research trainees

Section 3: *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*

The Code specifies that all research trainees should receive training on research ethics, the Code and the research policies of their institution. Furthermore, trainees need to understand that they are accountable to their enrolling institution for their behaviour when conducting research. Supervisors and senior researchers are expected to be positive role models to trainees to ensure a research culture of excellence, integrity, professionalism and mutual respect (NHMRC et al 2007).

Scenario

After attending a workshop on research ethics a PhD student becomes aware that the research conducted by their supervisor (a Professor in their Department) has not received ethics approval from the university's Human Ethics Committee. Furthermore, it is apparent that this research is unethical because the researcher is interviewing children (12 – 15 years) about their sexual experiences without the permission of the parents.

Points for discussion

1. What actions might the PhD student take?
2. Who should the PhD student contact?
3. What are the ramifications of this situation for the PhD student?
4. What are the ramifications of this situation for the supervisor?
5. Why is it important to gain ethics approval for all research?

National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia. 2007. *Revision of the Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice: Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, Canberra: Australian Government.

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