

# Responsible Conduct of Research

## *The Tri-Agency Approach to Responsible Conduct of Research*

**Karen Wallace  
Senior Advisor  
Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research**

**Research on the Rock Conference  
November 14, 2017**

**PANEL ON RESPONSIBLE  
CONDUCT OF RESEARCH**

# Overview of presentation

- Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)
- Governance of RCR
- Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research
- Role and responsibilities
- Breaches
- Process for addressing alleged breaches
- RCR statistics
- RCR education and outreach

# Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR)

An umbrella term that refers to conducting research responsibly throughout the entire life cycle of a research project

- Application for funding
- Conduct and analysis of research
- Management of research funds
- Dissemination of research results

# Why is RCR important?

- RCR is important because research is important
- Goal of research: advancement of knowledge
- To accomplish this goal, research must be accurate, reliable, credible – *trustworthy*
- Foundation for public trust (especially regarding publicly-funded research) - difficult to earn, easy to lose

# Tri-Agency Governance of RCR

- Joint responsibility of the three federal research agencies (the Agencies):
  - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
  - Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)
  - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
- Agencies provide funding to institutions and researchers on condition that:
  - Institutions comply with Agency policies and enforce those policies
  - Researchers follow Agency policies
- Based on policy, enforced through funding
- Institutional policies apply to all research conducted under the auspices or jurisdiction of an institution – regardless of source of funding

# Secretariat on Responsible Conduct of Research

**Mandate:** to promote high ethical standards in the responsible conduct of research

- A. Responsible conduct of research (research integrity)
  - Panel on Responsible Conduct of Research
  - Guidance document: *Tri-Agency Framework on Responsible Conduct of Research 2016 (RCR Framework)*
  
- B. Ethics of human research
  - Panel on Research Ethics
  - Guidance document: *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)*

# RCR Framework: Objectives

- Ensure that funding decisions made by the Agencies are based on **accurate** and **reliable** information;
- Ensure public funds for research are used **responsibly** and in accordance with funding agreements;
- Promote and protect the **quality**, **accuracy** and **reliability** of research funded by the Agencies;
- Promote **fairness** in the conduct of research and the process for addressing allegations of policy breaches; and
- Promote **transparency** in instances of serious breaches.

# RCR Framework: Scope

- Researchers who hold or apply for Agency funds must comply with the RCR Framework
- Each institution must develop and administer an RCR policy and address allegations of breach by its researchers
- Institutional RCR policies must comply with the minimum requirements of the RCR Framework
- RCR Framework applies to all research conducted under the auspices or jurisdiction of an eligible institution – regardless of source of funding

# Key elements of the RCR Framework

- Sets out **timelines** for inquiry and investigation into allegations of breach
- Requires at least one **external member** on institutional investigation committees
- Requires **a designated RCR contact** at each institution
- Requires researcher consent to **public disclosure of serious breaches** as a condition of applying for funding

# Responsibilities: Researchers

- Promote research integrity
- Provide true and accurate information to the Agencies
- Manage Agency funds responsibly
- Comply with Agency requirements for certain type of research
- Rectify breaches

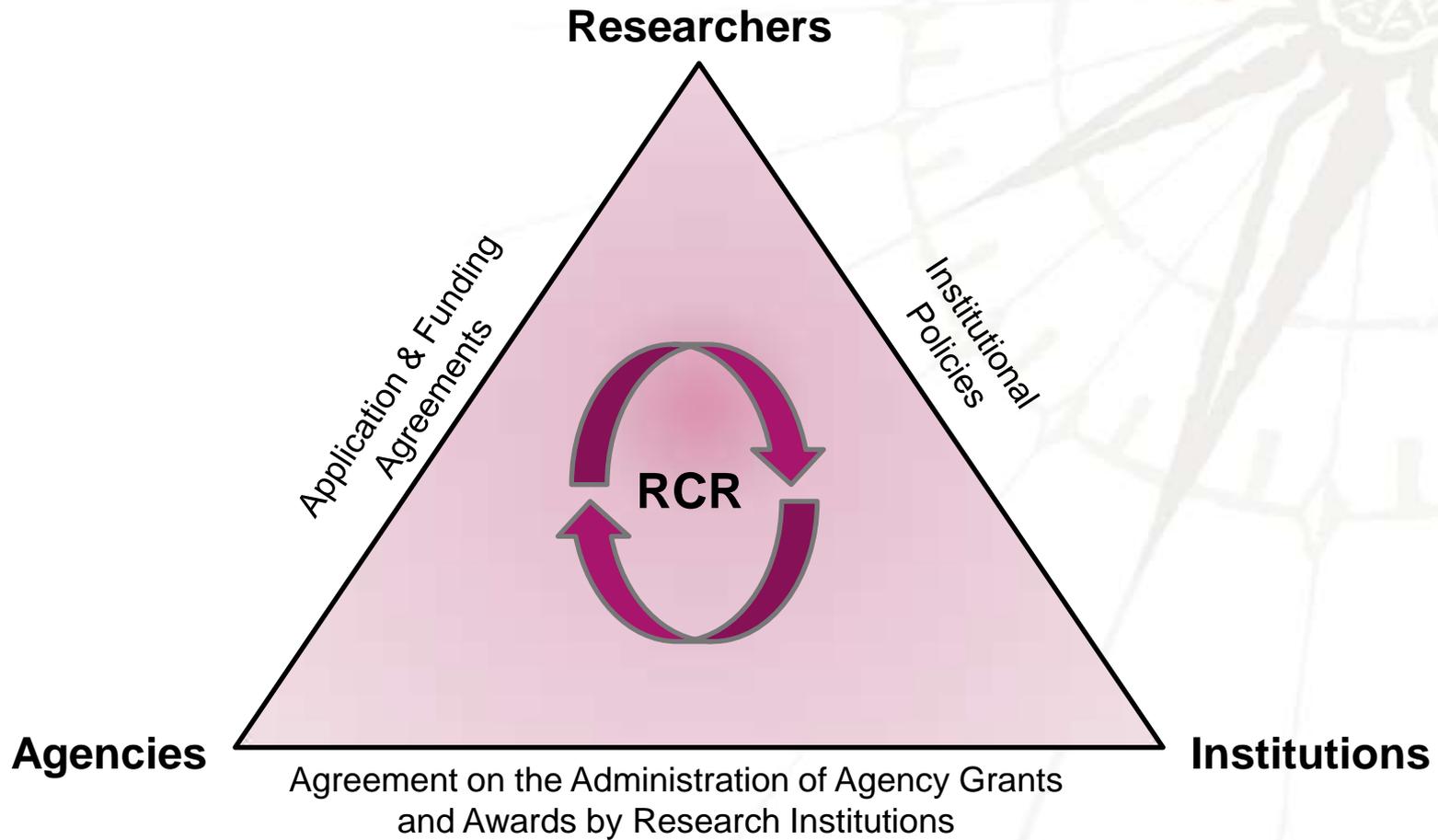
# Responsibilities: Institutions

- Develop and administer their own RCR policies that meet the minimum requirements of the RCR Framework
- Ensure researchers comply with the RCR Framework
- Investigate allegations in accordance with their RCR policies
- Report to Agencies when Agency funds are involved

# Responsibilities: Agencies

- Ensure institutions respect the timelines for conducting inquiries and investigations
- Examine institutional inquiry/investigation reports
- In cases of breach, determine whether to take recourse
- Respond to RCR questions and interpret RCR Framework

# RCR - Shared Responsibility



# Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research

- Joint framework of the three federal research agencies
- Describes responsibilities of researchers, institutions and Agencies
- Defines breaches of the RCR Framework
- Sets out the minimum requirements that must be included in institutional RCR policies regarding allegations
- Sets out the process that the Agencies follow for addressing allegations of breaches of Agency policies

# Breach of the RCR Framework

Failure to comply with any Agency policy throughout the life cycle of a research project – from application for funding, to the conduct of the research and the dissemination of research results.

*Article 3.1, RCR Framework*

# Intentionality

- The intention of an act is not relevant to the determination of a breach of the RCR Framework
- Any contravention of the RCR Framework is a breach (even honest error)
- Any breach, regardless of the reason, can negatively impact the integrity of the research and the integrity of the research record
- Intent is a consideration when deciding on the severity of the recourse that may be imposed

# Scope of breaches

- Broader than fabrication, falsification and plagiarism (FFP)
- In addition to FFP, breaches may include:
  - Mismanagement of grant or award funds
  - Invalid authorship or inadequate acknowledgment
  - Destruction of research records
  - Self-plagiarism
  - Mismanagement of conflict of interest
  - Inaccurate or misleading information in funding applications
  - Conducting research involving human participants without ethics approval

# Serious breach

- Definition
  - a breach that jeopardizes the safety of the public or brings the conduct of research into disrepute
- Assessment
  - nature of the breach
  - level of experience of the researcher
  - impact of the breach
  - other relevant factors
- Decision
  - made by Agency President, with the advice of PRCR
- Possible public disclosure
  - when applying for Agency funds, applicants consent to the disclosure of personal information in instances of serious breach



# Examples of real-life breaches

- Copying text from an article published by someone else and including it in one's own work without referencing the original article
- Changing raw data values to achieve expected outcomes
- Falsifying letters of support in a grant application
- Claiming the cost of purchases of personal items and personal travel against one's research grant account
- Falsifying the identity of research participants and then fabricating the resulting "participant data"
- Embellishing one's CV to improve chances of obtaining a research grant

# Recourse

Types of recourse available to the Agencies in the event of a breach include, but are not limited to:

- Letter of awareness/education
- Letter of reprimand
- Training
- Correction of the research record
- Termination of a grant or award
- Requirement to reimburse funds
- Ineligibility to participate in peer review committees
- Ineligibility to hold/ apply for Agency funding for a period of time or permanently
- Public disclosure (for serious breaches only)

# Panel on Responsible Conduct of Research

- arm's-length expert body (researchers, administrators)
- provides advice to the Agencies on matters related to the responsible conduct of research
- reviews institutional investigation reports
- advises Presidents on appropriate recourse in RCR matters
- reviews the RCR Framework every five years and provides advice to the Agencies on revisions to the Framework

# Tri-Agency Process for Addressing Allegations



# RCR Framework 2016: Highlights of revisions

- Clarification of **definitions** of researcher responsibilities and corresponding breaches;
- New responsibilities for researchers **participating in Agency review processes**;
- Information on **annual reporting** requirements for institutions;
- New institutional requirement that all **anonymous allegations** must be considered;
- Guidance on how to address allegations when **more than one institution** is involved.

# Statistics (December 5, 2011 to March 31, 2017)

- 250 files addressed
  - 192 closed
  - 58 active
- Of the 192 closed files
  - 83 files involved at least one breach (43%)
  - 109 files did not involve a breach (57%)

# Statistics (December 5, 2011 to March 31, 2017)

Categories of confirmed breaches :

- Plagiarism (23% or 26)
- Mismanagement of funds (15% or 16)
- Misrepresentation in an Agency application or related document (13% or 14)
- Lack of rigour (9% or 10)
- Falsification (8% or 9)
- Redundant publication / self-plagiarism (8% or 9)
- Breach of Agency policy or requirement for certain types of research (6% or 7)
- Mismanagement of conflict of interest (5% or 5)
- Invalid authorship (5% or 5)
- Fabrication (3% or 3)
- Other (5% or 5)

# Statistics (December 5, 2011 to March 31, 2017)

Types de recours imposed by the Agencies :

- Funding ineligibility (28% or 42)
- Peer review ineligibility (27% or 10)
- Letter of admonishment (17% or 26)
- Reimbursement of funds (11% or 16)
- Letter of awareness/education/ (8% or 12)
- Training (4% or 6)
- Termination of grant (3% or 5)
- Correction of the research record (1% or 1)
- Public disclosure (1% or 1)

# RCR Education and outreach

- **Interpretations** to clarify RCR Framework, in response to questions or comments
- **Engagement** with the research community to better serve its needs
  - Introductory webinar on RCR Framework
  - RCR Forum - virtual community of practice
  - RCR file summaries of confirmed breaches (to be posted soon)
  - Presentations at conferences and institutions
- **Support** to attend world conferences on research integrity to enhance knowledge of RCR

# Key take-away messages

- Promoting responsible conduct of research is a shared responsibility. Researchers, institutions, funders and others involved in the research process all have a role to play.
- RCR Framework is an important tool through which the Agencies promote responsible conduct of research.
- RCR education and engagement is critical to fostering and promoting a responsible conduct of research environment within every institution.

# Questions?



## SECRETARIAT ON RESPONSIBLE CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

Tel.: 613 996-0072  
secretariat@rcr.ethics.gc.ca

[www.rcr.ethics.gc.ca](http://www.rcr.ethics.gc.ca)

PANEL ON RESPONSIBLE  
CONDUCT OF RESEARCH