Semi. 1

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Research collaboration - Chapter 5

Relations with fellow researchers

Interaction with funding and commissioning bodies

Commercial aspects

Responsibility for a collaborative project: in general

Questions of responsibility in multinational research projects
Example issue

You are part of an international collaboration involving many research groups and with a lot of public funding from a public organisation. There is also a number of PhD-students funded solely with funding from the project.

The funding agency has tasked you with solving a problem with a method used in your field.

You discover that the problem is not possible to solve with this method, which means that the funding agency might withdraw the funding. For your research group there is still very much interesting possible research if the project continues, but it will not solve the problem given by the funding agency.
What would you do?

IF THIS EVIDENCE IS CORRECT IT'LL ROCK THE VERY FOUNDATIONS OF OUR RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATION
Ethical aspects

Collaboration with many research groups

Interaction with funding agency

Responsibility for PhD students and their funding

Sharing of data

Waste of money

Responsibility of progress of research
Option 1: Withhold data

Withhold data without telling collaborators pretending as nothing until new funding is secured. Consequences:

+ PhD students will get funding
+ Continued funding for all research groups
+ Possibility for proper investigation of the new results and related interesting findings
- Lying
- Money wasted from the point of the funding agency
- Research will be performed on a dead end as the other groups don’t know that the problem is impossible to solve.
- Setting bad examples for the fellow junior researchers who know about the result
Option 2: Tell everyone and publish immediately

+ Good scientific contribution.
+ No lying to collaborators
+ The research groups can start working with other things.
- All research groups involved may lose funding for possibly interesting research.
- Specifically, the funding for your PhD students is on the line.
- Negative record as manager for future funding application.
Option 3: Tell the collaborators about the results but conceal it from the funding agency until funding is secured.

- No lying to collaborators
- Continued funding for all research groups (including PhD students)
- All research groups have time to prepare for a new research direction
- Lying to funding agency
- The other research groups also have an ethical dilemma (and might spread the result to the funding agency)
- Someone else might publish the results
- Money wasted from the point of the funding agency
- Setting bad examples for the fellow junior researchers who know about the result