Research Collaboration

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In the course of a research project, you discover that a classic problem of applied psychology, which you and others have long been working on, has in fact been wrongly formulated.

With your deeper insight, you now realize that a number of earlier contributions in this field are irrelevant. Certain chemotherapeutic methods which seemed promising will probably not work. On the other hand, completely new possibilities have now opened up, though hardly of a kind that can be turned into commercial therapeutic products in the foreseeable future.

You have an annually renewable contract with a company to develop the originally envisaged chemotherapeutic methods into commercial products. That grant provides funding for a PhD student who needs another three years to complete her doctorate.

How do you act? Does the situation influence your eagerness to publish the new results without delay, results which you are almost certainly the only group in the world to have arrived at?
Decision

We decide to inform the company about our recent findings and their implications, in order to decide as a group on what to do next.

Consequence

• The companies ask that we keep the results secret.
Ethical Problems

**Dishonesty & Selfishness:** Keeping results secret from the public or breaking the trust of the company towards us.

**Conflicts:** Putting other people in a bad financial and professional situation, destroying collaboration and professional reputation.

**Responsibility:** Towards our student, the public and the company (as a collaborator).

**Scientific Progress:** Promote new science and opening of new possibilities, protection of public health.
Solutions

• What the company wants us to do: Keep it secret, and go on with the original method

Alternative

• What the company DOESN’T want us to do: Publish anyway
Affected Groups & Individuals

• Our self – Supervisor
• Our PhD student
• The Company & Employees
• The Public & Customers of the company

• Scientific Community
• The University
• Potential Students/Researchers who could work from the new findings
# Effect on Values and Interests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome of Decision</th>
<th>Alternative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Keep it Secret</td>
<td>Publish Anyway</td>
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- Work Integrity
- Finance
- Science ethics
- Career and self-promotion
- Professional Responsibility
- Group conflict

- Honesty Towards Public
- Finance
- Science ethics
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What will you do to make sure that the use of the solution will be optimal with regards to ethical aspects?

• There is no optimal solution?
• Transparency – violated if we keep our results secret.
• Clear structure of ownership of material and data and responsibility in the collaboration at an early stage – who has the right to do what?

• (Should we talk to competitors of the company..?)