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Statement on Protecting the Integrity of U.S. Biomedical Research

NIH research is built on the bedrock principles of scientific excellence, unassailable integrity, and fair competition. NIH's commitment to these principles is unwavering. We have long understood, however, that the robustness of the biomedical research enterprise is under constant threat by risks to the security of intellectual property and the integrity of peer review. This knowledge has shaped our existing policies and practices, but these risks are increasing. Three areas of concern have emerged: 1) failure by some researchers at NIH-funded institutions to disclose substantial contributions of resources from other organizations, including foreign governments, which threatens to distort decisions about the appropriate use of NIH funds; 2) diversion of intellectual property in grant applications or produced by NIH-supported biomedical research to other entities, including other countries; and 3) in some instances, sharing of confidential information by peer reviewers with others, including in some instances with foreign entities, or otherwise attempting to influence funding decisions.

While we depend on the major national security agencies and the Department of Health and Human Services' broad national security efforts to protect our national security interests, NIH and the U.S. biomedical research community at large have a vested interest in mitigating these unacceptable breaches of trust and confidentiality that undermine the integrity of U.S. biomedical research.

In response, NIH will work with other government agencies, NIH-funded academic institutions, U.S. professional organizations, and a working group of the Advisory Committee to the (NIH) Director to identify robust methods to: 1) improve accurate reporting of all sources of research support, financial interests, and affiliations; 2) mitigate the risk to intellectual property security while continuing NIH's long tradition of collaborations, including with foreign scientists and institutions; and 3) explore additional steps to protect the integrity of peer review.

The U.S. biomedical enterprise sets the standard for discovery and innovation excellence for the rest of the world. Our leadership position is made possible because the overwhelming majority of researchers participating on NIH grants, whether U.S. or foreign-born, are honest, hard-working contributors to the advancement of knowledge that benefits us all.

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.

Director, National Institutes of Health

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