

Responsible Conduct of Dual Use Research (RCDUR)

Framing the Issue and Focusing the Message

“Outreach and Education”

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Although individual researchers must bear ultimate responsibility for their actions, promoting responsible conduct in dual use research is not the sole responsibility of the individual. Institutions such as universities, funders, professional societies, industrial labs, and professional journals play a role in shaping the environment in which research is conducted.

These institutions serve as prominent normative reference groups, and their values, culture, and standards serve as guides by which individual researchers organize and perform their work.

Hence, the target audience(s) is the “scientific community,” including the individuals and social institutions that comprise it.

Messages must target all these actors.

Proposed Framework for the Oversight of Dual Use Life Sciences Research: Strategies for Minimizing the Potential Misuse of Research Information, June 2007

Outreach

NSABB has conducted outreach with two key purposes in mind: (2) to promote broader awareness of the dual use issue and to sensitize life scientists to its importance. Indeed, the NSABB has observed throughout this document that creating awareness about the dual use issue is of fundamental importance and critical to the success of an effective oversight system.

How to frame the issue in ways that:

- Convey its importance
- Secure acceptance
- Promote desired behavior

Guidelines for Framing the Issue

- Link to something with which audience is familiar – cues (not to persuade, but to reinforce concepts that audience already supports)
- Authoritative and respected source (e.g., scientific society, VP for Research, NSABB)
- Cast in language that resonates positively

What are the message cues?

- Critical role of S&T in matters of national security
- Leadership and ingenuity of scientific community
- Professional responsibility and accountability (individual and institutional)
- Connection among responsible conduct in research, lab safety, IBC's, and dual use research

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Education

To ensure that all individuals engaged in life sciences research are aware of the concerns and issues regarding dual use research and their roles and responsibilities in the oversight of such research.

[S]cientific societies, professional associations, and others in the private sector have an important contribution to make in promoting a culture of awareness and responsibility by educating broadly about dual use research, the associated tenets of responsible research, and the best practices in identifying and overseeing dual use research. The federal government can foster the development of such private sector training and education initiatives by providing appropriate resources for their development. Research institutions and associations should utilize these materials, tailoring them as needed to different audiences as part of promoting an awareness of dual use research issues among those involved in life sciences research.

GOAL OF RCDUR EDUCATION COMPLIANCE OR “EDUCATING BROADLY”?

If the goal is knowledge of and compliance with government or institutional rules, then educational programs will stress "facts." The emphasis will be on ensuring the researchers know what is *required* of them.

Rules and procedures will only go so far. We want people to act properly because it is the right thing to do, not because the law requires it.

As the poet T. S. Eliot cautioned in a very different context, we cannot “escape from the darkness outside and within by dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need to be good.”

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