

THE COMPASS

A BULLETIN BY THE RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICS OFFICE

Ethical Conduct of Research in Developing Countries

The [7th World Conference on Research Integrity](#) was recently held in Cape Town, South Africa. As this was the first time that the conference was held in a developing country, the research relationship between developed and middle/ low income countries was often mentioned. This was especially so in the context of Covid-19. Many South Africans felt that their country did not get vaccines any faster or more easily, despite having been a location for vaccine trials.

We learned some new terms. One of them is “[ethics dumping](#)”. This is the practice of taking research that is subject to strict regulation in one’s country and moving it to a developing country where standards are lax. An example would be trying out an experimental drug or medical procedure on patients in a country where there is no IRB or other protection for the subjects.

The other one is “[helicopter research](#)” or “[colonial science](#)”. In this, researchers from a developed country come to a developing country to collect data, acquire samples or study indigenous knowledge. They then return home to publish. The locals where the work was done, either academics or ordinary people, are no longer involved, gain no benefit, no new technology or knowledge, may not even become authors or have access to the final data.

If you have or have had collaborations with researchers in developing countries, do pause to consider whether you have treated your collaborators fairly. **NTU expects everyone to conduct their research ethically, wherever in the world that it is done.**



Note on Predatory Conferences

Travel restrictions imposed during the Covid-19 pandemic era have led to an increased prevalence of online or mixed attendance conferences that are adapting to cater to a global audience, such as the 7th World Conference on Research Integrity discussed above which catered to both in-person and online attendees.

In the face of growing ease in conference attendance, **NTU’s researchers are reminded to remain vigilant to predatory conferences** with some researchers and faculty receiving increasing number of unsolicited emails on such conference attendings and presentations. The article titled [Burden and Characteristics of Unsolicited Emails from Medical/Scientific Journals, Conferences, and Webinars to Faculty and Trainees at an Academic Pathology Department](#) discusses the astounding results of their study in which trainees and junior faculty from the pathology division were observed to have received an estimated 1500 unsolicited emails annually.

Think. Check. Attend is a campaign aimed at guiding researchers to identify and choose legitimate conferences to attend and present their research at. Researchers are encouraged to adopt this framework to critically assess conference invitations received so as to prevent reputational damage to both yourself and NTU. **Anyone who is unsure if a conference or journal is predatory or not can approach NTU RIO for advice.**



Email Us: [NTU-IRB](#) [NTU-IACUC](#) [RIO](#) [NTU Research Integrity Officer](#)

Web Links: [NTU-IRB](#) [NTU-IACUC](#) [Research Integrity](#) [ERMP](#)

