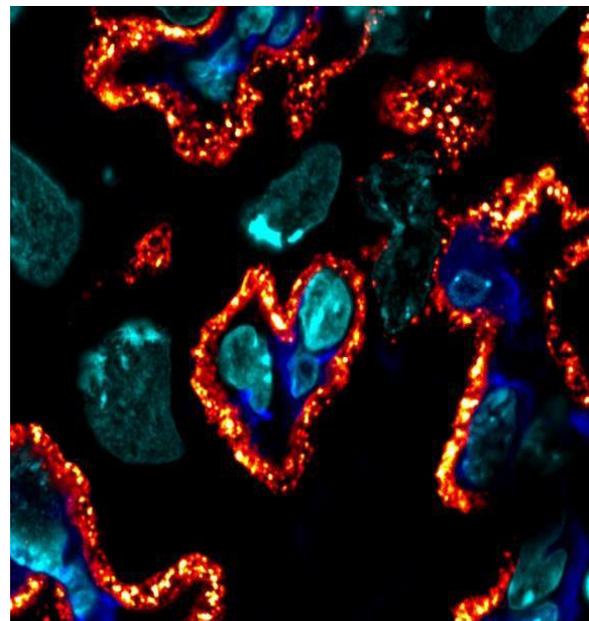


# Excellence in cardiovascular research

## VCCRI Research Code of Conduct 2019

Version 2.1

Image: This 4000x magnified image shows malformed mouse placental blood vessels. J. Moreau



## INTRODUCTION

The VCCRI is committed to ensuring the highest standards of research conduct, ethical behaviour, research integrity and corporate governance. VCCRI is further committed to the ethical framework of Mary Aikenhead Ministries with respect to respecting the sanctity of human embryos and not undertaking research on human embryo-derived stem cells.

This VCCRI Research Code of Conduct sets out the specific principles and responsibilities relating to research to which VCCRI is committed, and reflects the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*<sup>1</sup> (**Australian Code**).

### THE PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH CONDUCT

The VCCRI is committed to fostering a research culture that reflects the eight principles of responsible research conduct set out in the Australian Code as follows:

1. **Honesty** in the development, undertaking and reporting of research
  - Present information truthfully and accurately in proposing, conducting and reporting research
2. **Rigour** in the development, undertaking and reporting of research
  - Underpin research by attention to detail and robust methodology, avoiding or acknowledging biases
3. **Transparency** in reporting research methodologies, data and findings, and declaring interests
  - Share and communicate research methodology, data and findings openly, responsibly and accurately
  - Disclose and manage conflicts of interest
4. **Fairness** in the treatment of others
  - Treat fellow researchers and others involved in the research fairly and with respect
  - Appropriately reference and cite the work of others
  - Give credit, including authorship where appropriate, to those who have contributed to the research
5. **Respect** for research participants, the wider community, animals and the environment
  - Treat human participants and communities that contribute to and are affected by the research with care and respect, giving appropriate consideration to the needs of minority groups or vulnerable people
  - Ensure that respect underpins all decisions and actions related to the care and use of animals in research
  - Minimise adverse effects of the research on the environment
6. **Recognition** of the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be engaged in research that affects or is of particular significance to them
  - Recognise, value and respect the diversity, heritage, knowledge, cultural property and connection to land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
  - Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to research being undertaken so that they may freely make decisions about their involvement

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<sup>1</sup> National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, Universities Australia. *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, Canberra: Australian Government; 2018.

- Report to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the outcomes of research in which they have engaged
- 7. Accountability** for the development, undertaking and reporting of research
- Comply with relevant legislation, policies and guidelines
  - Ensure good stewardship of public resources to conduct research
  - Consider the consequences and outcomes of research prior to its communication
- 8. Promotion** of responsible research practices
- Promote and foster a research culture and environment that supports the responsible conduct of research

### **WHO DOES THIS VCCRI RESEARCH CODE OF CONDUCT APPLY TO?**

This VCCRI Research Code of Conduct applies to all research conducted at VCCRI and covers all workplace participants including employees and students of the Institute (whether full-time, part-time or casual) and all persons performing work at the direction of, in connection with, or on behalf of the Institute (for example board directors, contractors, subcontractors, honorary appointments, volunteers, consultants and temporary staff).

The VCCRI expects all its Researchers and support staff to abide by the VCCRI policies and procedures and all applicable regulations. Failure to abide by this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct or any of its associated policies may constitute grounds for disciplinary action. Where a Researcher is in doubt about the applicability of the VCCRI Research Code of Conduct, or about the appropriate course of action to be adopted in relation to it, advice should be sought from their Supervisor or the Research Integrity Advisor.

This VCCRI Research Code of Conduct is the overarching framework governing our research, and should be read in conjunction with other VCCRI policies including:

1. VCCRI Authorship Policy
2. VCCRI Management of Data and Information in Research Policy
3. VCCRI Peer Review Policy
4. VCCRI Disclosure of Interests and Management of Conflicts of Interest Policy
5. VCCRI Supervision Policy
6. VCCRI Collaborative Research Policy
7. Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Research Code of Conduct Policy
8. VCCRI Code of Conduct
9. VCCRI Animal Use Policy
10. VCCRI Disciplinary Policy
11. VCCRI Work Health and Safety Management System

### **DEFINITIONS**

A **Breach** of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct is a departure from the principles and responsibilities set out in this document. Breaches occur on a spectrum and can be minor (a less serious or an innocent error) or

major (more serious, including intentional, reckless or negligent behaviour). All Breaches may attract disciplinary action by supervisors or VCCRI management.

**Research Misconduct** is a serious Breach of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct which is also intentional, reckless or negligent. Research Misconduct does not include honest differences in judgement or innocent error. Unintentional errors generally do not constitute Research Misconduct unless they result from behavior that is reckless or negligent. Examples of conduct which may amount to Research Misconduct include:

1. Fabrication, falsification or deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting the results of research
2. Repeated or persistent Breaches, particularly where those Breaches have been the subject of previous counselling or specific direction
3. Plagiarism in proposing, or carrying out, a research design or reporting the outcomes of research
4. Misleading attribution of authorship
5. Failure to declare or manage a serious conflict of interest
6. Conducting research without the required human or animal ethics committee approvals
7. Failing to follow protocols and directives approved by a research ethics committee, particularly where this failure may result in unreasonable risk to humans, animals or the environment
8. Risking the safety of human participants or the wellbeing of animals or the environment
9. Wilful concealment or facilitation of Research Misconduct by others or coercing others to conceal or facilitate Research Misconduct

For the purposes of this document, **Researchers** refers to all personnel performing research work at the direction of, in connection with, or on behalf of VCCRI including all research staff employed by the VCCRI, and all students, research contractors, volunteers, visiting academics, affiliates and honorary appointees.

**Supervisor** refers to those research staff who have formal, direct responsibility for other Researchers and includes Faculty, Laboratory Heads, Group Leaders, Heads of Core Facilities and the Executive Director.

**Research Integrity Advisors** are experienced Researchers with a sound knowledge and understanding of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct and the VCCRI Policy for Managing and Investigating Potential Breaches of the Research Code of Conduct. The role of the Research Integrity Advisor is to promote the responsible conduct of research and provide advice to those with concerns about potential Breaches of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct including with respect to how to make a Complaint.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF VCCRI**

It is the responsibility of VCCRI to foster and uphold an ethical and responsible research culture at all times. VCCRI is accountable to funding organisations and the Australian community for how research is conducted. To foster responsible research conduct, VCCRI is committed to:

1. Establishing and maintaining good governance and management practices for responsible research conduct.
2. Identifying and complying with relevant laws, regulations, guidelines and policies related to the conduct of research.

3. Developing and maintaining the currency and ready availability of a suite of policies and procedures which ensure that VCCRI practices are consistent with the principles and responsibilities of the Australian Code.
4. Providing ongoing training and education that promotes and supports responsible research conduct for all Researchers and those in other relevant roles.
5. Ensuring that supervisors of research trainees have the appropriate skills, qualifications and resources.
6. Identifying and training Research Integrity Advisors who assist in the promotion and fostering of responsible research conduct and provide advice to those with concerns about potential Breaches of the Code.
7. Supporting the responsible dissemination of research findings. Where necessary, taking action to correct the record in a timely manner.
8. Providing access to facilities for the safe and secure storage and management of research data, records and primary materials and, where possible and appropriate, allowing access and reference.
9. Facilitating the prevention and detection of potential Breaches of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct.
10. Providing mechanisms to receive concerns or complaints about potential Breaches of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct and investigating and resolving potential Breaches of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct.
11. Ensuring that the process for managing and investigating concerns or complaints about potential Breaches of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct is timely, effective and in accordance with procedural fairness.
12. Supporting the welfare of all parties involved in an investigation of a potential Breach of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct.
13. Basing findings of investigations on the balance of probabilities and ensuring any actions are commensurate with the seriousness of the Breach.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS**

Researchers at VCCRI are required to uphold the principles of responsible research conduct in all aspects of their research. Accordingly, Researchers are required to:

1. Support a culture of responsible research conduct at VCCRI and in their field of practice.
2. Provide guidance and mentorship on responsible research conduct to other Researchers or research trainees under their supervision and, where appropriate, monitor their conduct.
3. Undertake and promote education and training in responsible research conduct.
4. Comply with the relevant laws, regulations, disciplinary standards, ethics guidelines and institutional policies related to responsible research conduct. Ensure that appropriate approvals are obtained prior to the commencement of research, and that conditions of any approvals are adhered to during the course of research.
5. Ensure that the ethics principles of research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect are applied to human research.
6. Engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and respect their legal rights and local laws, customs and protocols.
7. Ensure that the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement) are considered at all stages of research involving animals and minimize the impacts on animals used in research and in so doing support the welfare and wellbeing of these animals.
8. Adopt methods appropriate to the aims of the research and ensure that conclusions are justified by the

results.

9. Retain clear, accurate, secure and complete records of all research including research data and primary materials. Where possible and appropriate, allow access and reference to these by interested parties.
10. Disseminate research findings responsibly, accurately and broadly. Where necessary, take action to correct the record in a timely manner.
11. Disclose and manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.
12. Ensure that authors of research outputs are all those, and only those, who have made a significant intellectual or scholarly contribution to the research and its output, and they agree to be listed as an author.
13. Acknowledge those who have contributed to the research.
14. Cite and acknowledge other relevant work appropriately and accurately subject to limitations set by journals.
15. Participate in peer review in a way that is fair, rigorous and timely and maintains the confidentiality of the content.
16. Report suspected Breaches of this VCCRI Research Code of Conduct to the relevant institution and/or authority.

## QUESTIONS

Any questions about this Policy should be directed to the Head, Governance, Compliance and Legal. VCCRI reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this Policy from time to time.

## POLICY HISTORY

Responsibility	Head Governance, Compliance, Legal	
Authorised	Jason Kovacic	
Approved	Jason Kovacic	
Consultation	Specific Faculty Members	
Informed	All Staff	
Review date	May 2022	
Version	Commencement Date	Amendment
1.0	13 December 2012	New policy
1.1	April 2015	Reformatted into separate individual policies. This policy updated to include Singapore Statement 2010, NHMRC Animal Code 2013, privacy legislation (Cth and NSW), the Fair Work Act 2009 and updated VCCRI Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct. Updated to include use of

		HREC other than SVH HREC.
2.0	June 2019	This policy was updated to reflect the revised Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research 2018, incorporating eight principles, thirteen responsibilities of institutions and sixteen responsibilities of Researchers. New definitions of Breach and Research Misconduct added.
2.1	May 2020	Further refinements to more closely reflect the Australian Research Code of Conduct