**Annual statement from the Medical Research Council on Research Integrity and Scientific Misconduct for the period 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013.**

1. Summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues

* In August 2012, the MRC published its updated ‘Good Research Practice’ (GRP) guidelines[[1]](#footnote-1). This sets out the principles that MRC-funded scientists must take into account when planning and conducting research, and when recording, reporting, and applying the results. Whereas other MRC guidelines explain in detail the scientific and ethical principles that should underpin the research we fund, our document is designed to help scientists achieve those standards in practice. Although primarily intended for MRC-funded scientists, the MRC hopes that other researchers and those involved in reviewing or supervising research will find them helpful.
* In January 2013, the MRC Director of Corporate Affairs delivered training courses on GRP to MRC staff at three different locations at the MRC Unit in The Gambia.
* Consideration is now being given to the development of on-line courses on GRP
* The RCUK [Policy and Guidelines on the Governance of Good Research Conduct](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Publications/researchers/Pages/grc.aspx) includes “Peer reviewers must declare any conflicts of interest, including professional, personal or commercial conflicts, and must not take advantage of any information received as a result of their peer reviewing role”. New guidance on declaring interests is being prepared for MRC Board and Panel members, and may be adopted in due course by the other Councils.

1. Assurances that the processes employers have in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, robust and fair, and that they continue to be appropriate to the needs of the organisation.

* The MRC’s ‘Scientific misconduct policy and procedure’ was first published in December 1997 and was updated in December 2008[[2]](#footnote-2). Following the UUK Concordat, the document is being revised again and will be formally adopted by all Councils employing research staff.
* During the year there have been a number of allegations of misconduct in MRC establishments (see table below). Experience with these has shown that the MRC’s procedure has been fit for purpose.

1. High-level statement on any formal investigations of research misconduct/Statistics

The following information concerns allegations made against current or former MRC employees or PhD students in MRC establishments.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Number of investigations that were underway during the year | 1 |
| Of these the number that started during the year | 1 |
| Number of investigations completed during the year: i) upheld  ii)not upheld | 0 |
| 0 |
| Number of allegations that did not proceed to a full investigation\* | 12 |

*\* Allegations from an anonymous source, sent on two separate occasions, relating to several images in each of 12 papers, on which the same member of MRC staff was an author. Initial assessment of the allegations concluded that here was insufficient evidence that misconduct may have taken place to warrant a full investigation. This anonymous source is prolific and also sends MRC Head Office numerous allegations against scientists who are not MRC employees. Where these relate to MRC-funded work they are forwarded to the relevant employer.*

As an indicator of scale, the number of MRC employees as at 31/3/13 was 3219[[3]](#footnote-3).

[However, of course this does not represent a true denominator as it includes many staff unlikely ever to be in a position to commit research misconduct].

1. [www.mrc.ac.uk/Ourresearch/Ethicsresearchguidance/Researchpractice/principles\_guidelines/index.htm](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Ourresearch/Ethicsresearchguidance/Researchpractice/principles_guidelines/index.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [www.mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC005820](http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?d=MRC005820) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This does not include locally employed staff in the MRC Units in The Gambia and Uganda [↑](#footnote-ref-3)