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Data fabrication and fallacious research: analysing in lab experiments of pharmaceutical companies

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ABSTRACT

Data fabrication is often explained as the falsification of data and is an act that offers false impression about the specific data. It is also defined by Shamoo & Resnik (2014) as the method of making up of research findings. Despite the considerable resources that are invested into maintaining high academic standards and scientific ethics, examples of scientific misconduct are relatively frequent. This is the case in relation to a number of different scientific disciplines, but is particularly notable in the pharmaceutical industry. While there have been several high-profile cases of misconduct in the field of research in the pharmaceutical industry, for instance with regard to the research behind the creation of Prozac or the tenuous link between vaccines and autism, there have also been other less well known cases which have also been significant (Hoogendoorn and de Lange, 2013; Gerber and Offit, 2009; Wakefield, 1998). Indeed, the research suggests that scientific misconduct is more prevalent than otherwise estimated (John, Lowenstein and Prelec, 2012). Due to the importance of the industry, the existence of scientific misconduct is extremely problematic. It points to not only a regulatory system which is obviously inadequate in effectively preventing misconduct, but it also suggests that the internal culture of pharmaceutical companies and research entities is in need of repair (Cohen-Kohler and Esmail, 2007). The study will look into pharmaceutical research practices of companies. Fabrication of experimental data and misrepresentation of information are some of the issues that have emerged as notably problematic in recent times. The study will analyse such cases before looking at where the problems have developed from, for instance commercial pressures of big pharma firms or an inadequate regulatory system which has been unduly influenced by lobbying. A suite of recommendations will then be made to address these causative pressures and tackle the issue of research misconduct in the pharmaceutical industry.

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