

Scientific misbehavior may be commonplace

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A University of Michigan study suggests the competitive nature of research might be fostering an environment in which scientific misbehavior often occurs.

Such misconduct that calls the integrity of science into question is only uncovered and reported perhaps a dozen times a year in the United States. Although that indicates there isn't much misbehaving in the research arena, Michigan Professor Raymond De Vries says that assumption might not be correct.

De Vries says the competitive nature of research fosters an environment in which scientific misbehavior takes place far more often than is reported in the news. And because scientific misbehavior involves more mundane decisions and actions, it may be easier for researchers to ignore.

"This paper, along with some others, shows that unbridled competition is not good, and we need to think of the conditions of science and to be more public in how we deal with these issues," said De Vries, an associate professor of medical education. "We need to think about the way we fund science, the way we create new scientists, and work to create an environment that also promotes organizational justice."

The study appears in the Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics.

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