



Research Ethics and Integrity Newsletter

Summer Issue 2023 | Volume 2: 2nd Edition

Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of the WRAIR Research Ethics and Integrity newsletter! We hope this newsletter serves as a useful resource to you as you carry out your daily research responsibilities.

This newsletter is for all personnel (MIL, CIV, and CTR) currently working at WRAIR and its Forward Directorates who are involved with or interested in learning about research, research ethics, scientific oversight, or scientific integrity.

WRAIR's Research Ethics and Integrity (REI) Team

The REI team supports WRAIR's mission by providing input on scientific processes and procedures to help researchers meet the highest scientific and ethical standards. We provide research ethics consultation, organize education and training, develop and write policies and procedures, and conduct regular assessments to understand current needs and priorities for responsible conduct of research.

Meet the New REI Team Members

Your Research Ethics and Integrity Team is comprised of Dr. Liza Dawson, Dr. Jake Earl, Dr. Bhagya Wickramaratne, and Elisa Reverman.



Dr. Bhagya Wickramaratne

Bhagya has been with WRAIR since 2023 as a Scientific Review and Oversight Fellow. She assists with committee management, training materials, policies, and SOPs for the Institutional Biosafety committee and the Scientific Review Committee. In her free time, she enjoys crochet and listening to music.

Elisa Reverman

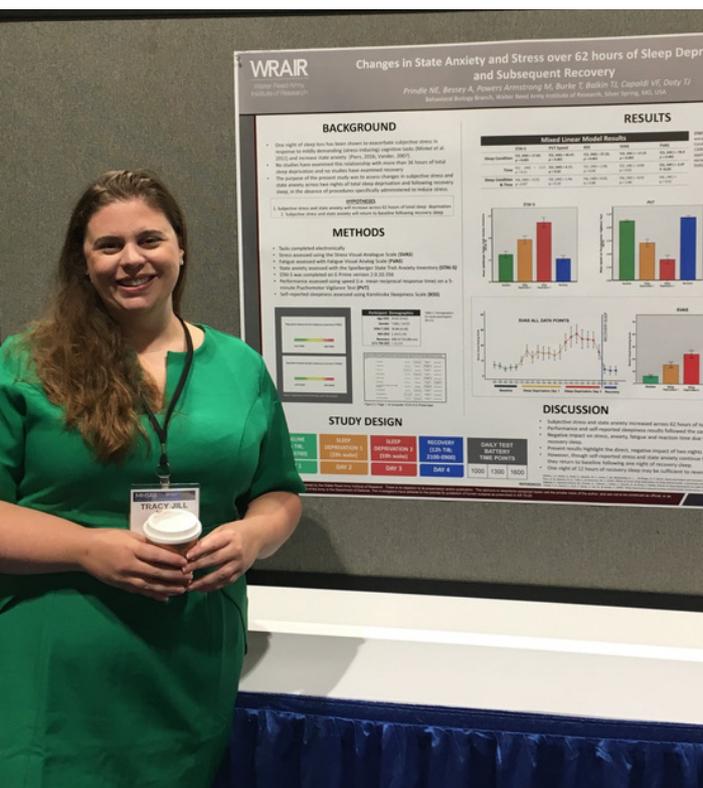
Elisa recently joined WRAIR in 2023, serving as the Research Ethics and Integrity Specialist.

She organizes training and education events on research ethics and integrity and the responsible conduct of research.

In her free time, she enjoys playing video games and rock climbing.



WRAIR Scientist Spotlight: Dr. Tracy Jill Doty



Dr. Doty completed her PhD in Clinical Neuroscience at the National Institutes of Health in partnership with the Karolinska Institute Graduate Partnership Program. Her love of neuroscience began in her undergraduate studies, where she researched multisensory integration using EEG and studied amygdala volumetry using magnetic resonance imaging. Her later graduate work focused on affective cognitive neuroscience, which uncovered the neural underpinnings of variability to threat responses in healthy humans.

As a post-doctoral fellow, Dr. Doty led an effort to build a multimodal system for studying stress in the real world. Her biggest finding there was that sleep was the most important predictor of stress reactivity. This finding, and her continued interest in stress predictors, led her to take an opportunity to study sleep at WRAIR. Currently, Dr. Doty is the chief of the Sleep Research Center within the Behavioral Biology Branch. Her current projects focus on interventions to enhance sleep restoration and alertness during wake using electrical brain stimulation, caffeine, and performance modeling. She is also a longstanding IRB member.

On top of all her research, Dr. Doty serves as an inaugural member of the Alabama School of Mathematics and Science Alumni Council. She is also a cask-conditioned ale enthusiast, and has served as the Vice President of the Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Society of Preservation of Beers from the Wood. She also was a first-generation college student.

Bioethics Corner : Representation in Genomics Research

Many societies, including the United States, see substantial inequalities among groups in access to health care and other resources, which result in large disparities in overall opportunity and well-being. Because these disparities cannot plausibly be attributed to individual choice, they raise serious concerns about justice and fairness. Health research can improve or worsen these inequalities, and the potential social impacts of genomics research is highlighted by two recent developments.

When researchers completed the Human Genome Project at the turn of the century, it was not fully finished. Large segments of the genome had not been decoded, and because the source samples came from a few people mostly of European descent, they did not represent the full genetic variability within the human population, especially people of African, Asian, and Indigenous American descent. In May 2023, an international team of researchers published the first draft of a human pangenome reference, an assembly of 47 complete, composite genomes developed from a diverse sample set to represent human genetic diversity. The researchers hope to add over 300 more genomes to the reference in the coming years, which will help to ensure that all people can benefit from future health applications of genomics research.

Relatedly, in March 2023, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine released a new report on best practices for communicating about race and ethnicity in genomics research. The report notes that researchers often describe their findings in ways that imply that race and ethnicity are essentially biological characteristics, which is incorrect and potentially harmful. The report recommends providing more specific and more accurate descriptions of study populations, reserving racial and ethnic identifiers for findings that are most directly applicable to those groups, and avoiding terminology with disparaging connotations or histories (e.g., “Caucasian” as a term for White people came from racist pseudoscience).

Important Updates

- Dr. Zubin Master of the Mayo Clinic will headline an educational event on best practices and challenges in scientific authorship on **September 19th, 2023**. Save the date!
- New policy alert! The REI team has been working on a Research Data Management policy, which will be out soon.
- A WRAIR publication clearance policy is in the works, aiming to make clear the publications approval process. This policy will be synchronized with the new submission system portal.
- The REI team presented two posters at the WRAIR 130th Anniversary Event, covering both the services of the REI team and the historical development of research ethics.



REI Quiz

Question: Who was the de facto leader of the International Human Genome Sequencing Consortium when President Bill Clinton announced the completion of the Human Genome Project on April 14, 2003? (Note: You can find the answer in one of this issue’s linked resources!)



The winner of the previous quiz, **CPT Margeaux Auslander**, Chief of Laboratory Operations, Military Psychiatry Branch.

Question: Historically, physicians would sometimes infect patients with one infectious organism in the (misguided) hope that it would alleviate symptoms or even cure another infectious disease. What infectious organism did physicians use to attempt to treat syphilis?

Answer: Malaria-causing plasmodium parasite

Email your answer to elisa.c.reverman_ctr@health.mil with the subject line “REI Newsletter Quiz.” The winner and correct answer will be announced in the next issue. (Only WRAIR Forest Glen staff are eligible to receive free breakfast at this time.)

News and Views

Behavioral Science – [Harvard Researcher Francesca Gino accused of falsifying data](#)

The Scientist - [What should we do when research animal models are listed as endangered?](#)

Scientific American - [A Simple Replication Agreement Could Improve Trust in Science](#)

ProPublica - [Why Scientists Have a Hard Time Getting Money to Study the Root Causes of Outbreaks](#)

Science - [France will require Ph.D.s to take a research ethics oath](#)



Upcoming Event

Have you ever had a disagreement about the authorship of a scientific publication?

Come to our event, **Scientific Authorship: Challenges and Best Practices**, to hear guest speaker Dr. Zubin Master and panelists discuss strategies for handling difficult authorship conversations! The event will be on Teams and in the WRAIR Auditorium on **Tuesday, September 19th from 14:00-15:30**.



Reach Out to the REI Team

The Research Ethics and Integrity team is always interested in WRAIR input and feedback! We can be reached by emailing Liza Dawson at liza.dawson.civ@health.mil.

The team provides confidential research ethics consultations, works on policy development, and organizes educational events.

Disclaimer: WRAIR does not endorse the information provided at any of the URLs above. They are provided for informational purposes only.

Emerging Research Ethics Challenges

There is renewed interest in the potential therapeutic benefits of psychedelics, [including possible treatments for veterans](#) with PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and depression. In fact, this year's National Defense Authorization Act includes a [directive to conduct military-relevant clinical research on psychedelics](#). In 2021, The NIH also announced the [first government grant for psychedelic research](#) in fifty years. As political attitudes toward psychedelics have slowly been shifting, researchers are looking to conduct more studies to better understand them.

Psychedelics research involves several interesting research challenges, particularly with study design. For one, evidence shows that not blinding a study can lead to [bias that exaggerates the studied treatment's effects](#). For this reason, data from double-blind, randomized controlled trials is highly desirable. However, successfully blinding a trial on psychedelics has proven challenging. Research participants tend to be able to guess whether they've been administered a psychedelic or a placebo. What's more, context and expectations tend to [heavily influence people's experience](#) when using psychedelic drugs. The [interplay of psychedelics and patient expectations](#) is important for understanding, for example, a drug's ability to alleviate conditions like PTSD.



One method to gather quality data on the effects of psychedelics has been to [wipe the memories of study participants' psychedelic drug experience](#). By chemically inducing amnesia, researchers can gain a more accurate understanding of psychedelic drugs' potential for therapeutic effects. While psychedelic treatments will remain controversial in the near future, methodological developments in study design provide exciting potential for innovation in multiple areas of clinical research.