

Report on Research Compliance Volume 17, Number 1. January 01, 2020 NIH's Lauer: Foreign Influence 'Worsening'; Involves 'Deceit'

By Theresa Defino

The issue of inappropriate foreign influences in U.S. research “is getting worse,” according to Michael Lauer, NIH deputy director for extramural research. Lauer provided an update on the efforts to uncover and manage illegal work arrangements, intellectual theft, and violations of peer review, among the examples of problems during a recent meeting of the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD).^[1]

But he said it’s still not possible to quantify the scope of misdeeds. “The honest answer is we don’t yet know the extent of the problem,” said Lauer.

More is being learned, however, about just what has gone wrong.

“We are seeing undisclosed foreign employment, undisclosed foreign grant support” that overlap with NIH funding, Lauer told the ACD. “We have had cases where we are funding the exact same grant, absolutely identical, that is funded by a foreign country.”

Lauer said such situations have led to repayment or reimbursement of NIH funding.

Other examples include “failure to disclose significant financial conflicts of interest in patents” and “significant peer review violations,” Lauer added, including instances of confidential applications being emailed to foreign institutions.

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