

Biological Sciences First Year Seminar on Research Ethics

Introduction: Between Scandal & Protectionism

As you read the material for our first class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although we strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in a written response for this set of readings. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues during our introductory meeting.

Readings

- Michael D. Lemonick & Andrew Goldstein, with Alice Park, “At Your Own Risk”.
- Martin E. P. Seligman, “Infectious Disease” and “Ethics and Institutional Review Boards”.

Questions

1. These two articles seem to offer radically different positions about how scientific research ought to be regulated and what a researcher may do in the name of scientific progress. How would you describe the points of disagreement between the articles?
2. Both articles seem to agree, however, that the current system for conducting research is flawed. Do they identify the same sorts of problems, or different ones? What solutions to these problems do they each appear to endorse?
3. What is an IRB? Which article do you believe has the stronger and more compelling argument when it comes to the problems with IRBs?