



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Ethics and Pressure

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Description

The funding agency puts pressure on a professor and his student to finish a report and publish, although the student believes the results may not be accurate.

Body

A pharmaceutical company approves funds for a project to test a new drug that could improve the reproductive performance of bovines in a tropical environment. The author of the proposal, a college professor, will supervise a graduate student, who will work on the project as a part of the requirements for his doctoral degree. Two herds were to be used: a private, commercial one, and a governmental herd from the Agricultural Experimental Station. The study would compare the effects of the recommended dose of the drug against a drug-free control group. In order for the study to acquire relevance in the commercial and competitive areas, private herds of larger volume which belong to important clients are used; even though the workers in such places, in general, are not trained for the experimental procedures.

When all the data is gathered at the end of the experimental period, the results in the Agricultural Experimental Station's herd show a clear advantage towards the treatment with the drug, while the results in the commercial unit show no

differences. When the experimentation process is concluded, the student listens to some commentaries from the employees working with the commercial herd which make him believe that the treatment was not given in the proper manner. Unfortunately, he lacks the written evidence to corroborate his belief. The data on the commercial herd is absolutely necessary to achieve the objectives of the study.

The student wants to finish his thesis and graduate because he has already been offered a job. The pharmaceutical company, on the other hand, puts pressure on the professor to finish the report so that he can submit it and publish the results.

- Would it be possible to finish the thesis and publish the results on time while not violating any ethical principles? Explore and explain this possibility. Why?

Notes

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