



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Confidentiality and Data Access

## Author(s)

Caroline Whitbeck

## Year

2000

## Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about a situation where sensitive data is shared between collaborators.

## Body

A clinical psychologist-investigator, whom you know, did his own pilot study of psychiatric patients with certain characteristics. This work suggested interesting implications for your own studies, and you approached him about being a co-investigator on a new study. His role is to interview a certain population of patients and score them for certain characteristics. You agreed that you would be first author on any publications in your field, and he would be first author on any publications in clinical psychology. The work was completed several years ago and you published two articles in your field with yourself as first author. Your colleague has since taken on heavy administrative responsibilities and has yet not written anything and only was able to participate in commenting on one of the two articles you drafted and so was listed as an author only on that one. You are aware that, as PI for the grant that funded the work, you have responsibility to ensure confidentiality of patient data and are concerned that your collaborator has data of a sensitive nature. Although your collaborator removed names, addresses and

patient record numbers form the data, the interviews paint a detailed picture of the physical and mental condition of each patient, detail that the psychologist says he needs in writing up his own articles. Your colleague says that he does intend to publish based on his pilot study and your joint work, but he does not know when.

What, if anything, should you do now?

## **Notes**

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

## **Contributor(s)**

Caroline Whitbeck

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## **Parent Collection**

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

## **Topics**

Human Subjects Research

Confidentiality

Data Management

## **Publisher**

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