



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Commercialization

## Author(s)

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## Year

2000

## Description

Should donors of human biological material for research be told of the potential profits companies and researchers may gain from this research?

## Body

A scientist supported by both NIH and private sources is tracking down a gene that she believes helps to mediate the process by which the walls of blood vessels begin to accumulate the deposits that lead to occlusion, restricted blood flow, and ultimately to disease. The next step in her research requires obtaining fresh samples of tissue from people being treated for myocardial infarctions and ischemic strokes. She is very hopeful that once she has identified the alleles of the gene associated with the buildup of deposits on arterial walls, a test can be developed and marketed that would identify those individuals with moderate or high cholesterol who are at most risk.

- Should the scientist offer to share whatever royalties she might receive with the donors of the tissue?
- Should the informed consent include information that this research may well have commercial applications, and that the donors of the human biological materials will not share in the profits that might come?

## 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 Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item.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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## Resource Type

Case Study / Scenario

## Parent Collection

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

## Topics

Informed Consent

Human Subjects Research

Intellectual Property and Patents

## Discipline(s)

Life and Environmental Sciences

Genetics and Genomics

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