



SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022

## Dear <<First Name>>,

Welcome to the September/October 2022 edition of the *Research Ethics Monthly*. This is a free publication for the Human Research Ethics, Research Integrity and Animal Ethics community. We produce and distribute this publication, thanks to the generous support of our patrons (see below for more details).

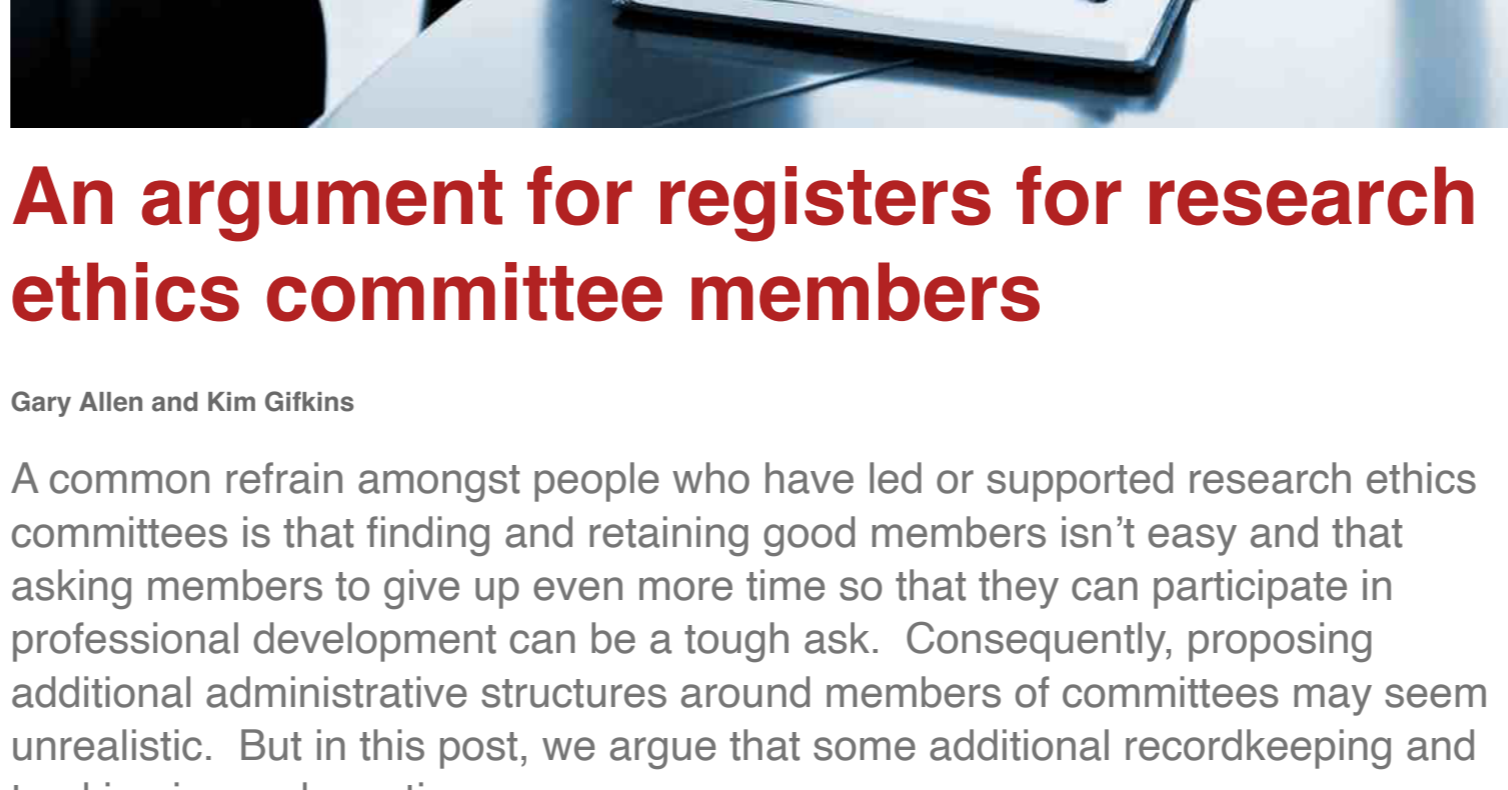
Amongst Gary's various activities, he is involved in Outcomes Australia, a social enterprise that has amongst its goals to address the shameful level of organ donation in Australia. If you're interested in finding out more about what's going on in Australia, they have produced a short quiz - [click here to access the quiz](#). This is a matter of medical ethics, social justice, equity and respect.

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Are there insights to Human Research Ethics, Research Integrity and Animal Ethics you would like to contribute or receive? Send your ideas to [researchethicsmonthly@ahrecs.com](mailto:researchethicsmonthly@ahrecs.com) (see below for more details).

More information about *Research Ethics Monthly* can be found on the [blog pages](#). Also, there are links to our previous editions all the way back to May 2015.

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## An argument for registers for research ethics committee members

Gary Allen and Kim Gilkine

A common refrain amongst people who have led or supported research ethics committees is that finding and retaining good members isn't easy and that asking members to give up even more time so that they can participate in professional development can be a tough ask. Consequently, proposing additional administrative structures around members of committees may seem unrealistic. But in this post, we argue that some additional recordkeeping and tracking is good practice.

The [National Statement](#) advice on appointment of members includes providing members with a formal notice of appointment and for institutions to consider reviewing appointments to the research ethics committee.

Good governance practice would include recording the date on which individuals are appointed to the committee, when their membership term needs to be renewed and if there is a maximum date on their membership term.

Even great members shouldn't be appointed to a committee with an open-ended membership term. Most people will need at least three years to get comfortable in their role. Nevertheless, three years is a good time to reflect on whether they are an active, informed and positive member of the committee.

Five years could also be an additional point to reflect on whether to renew their membership. No member should really serve beyond seven years.

Maintaining an overall register of your members will give you a snapshot of how the membership of the committee stands.

Read more

## NHMRC's revised Open Access Policy released

On 20 September, the NHMRC released an updated policy on open access. This is the first policy by an Australian research funding institution that requires that funded research must be immediately publicly available, rather than behind a paywall.

We congratulate the NHMRC on this move, which has, over that last few years, been introduced by funding bodies in Europe and the US. We agree with the principle that if public funds have been used to conduct research, then the public should be able to access the outputs of the funded research without having to pay a subscription fee.

### RELATED READS

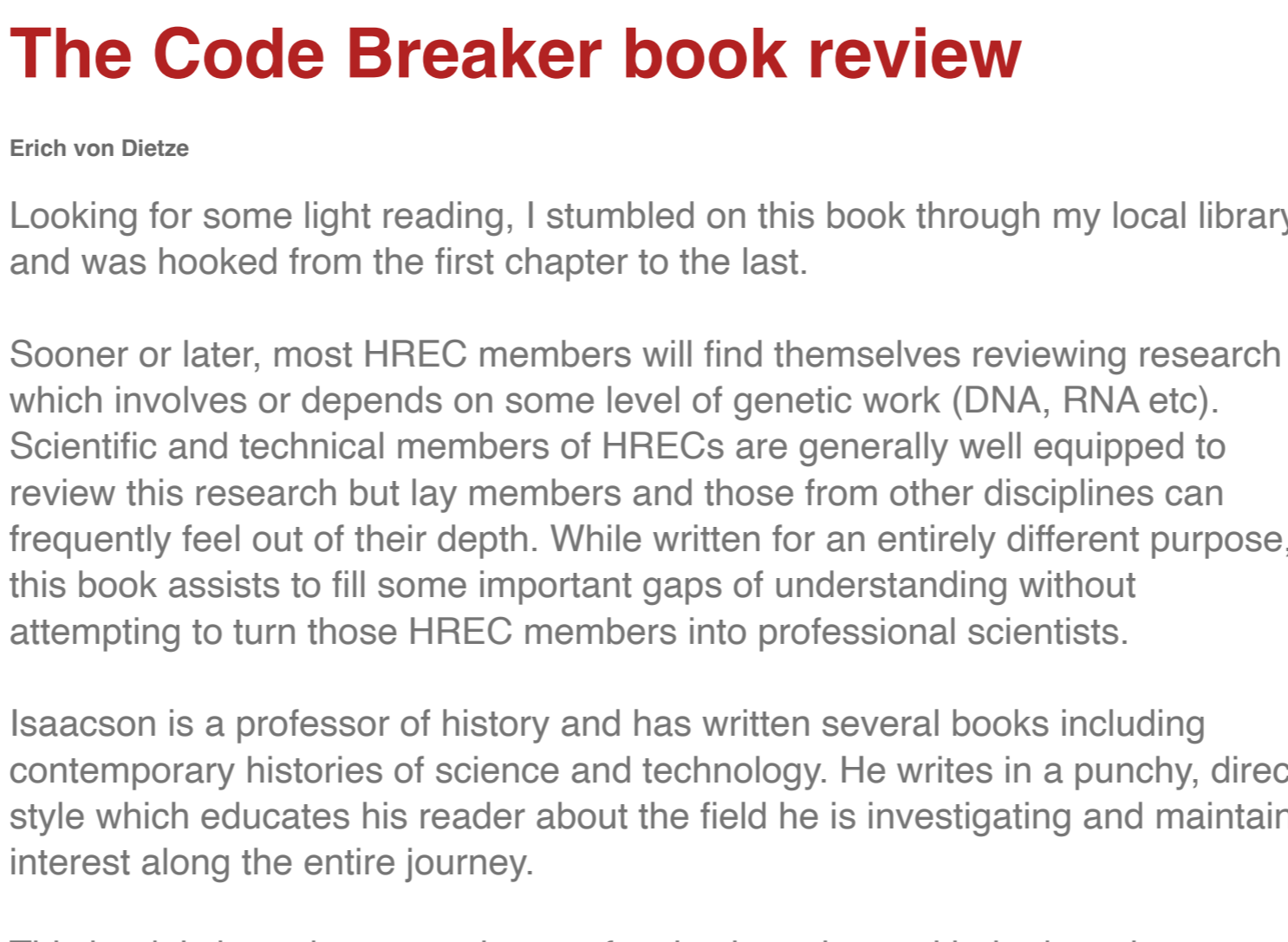
[US orders publicly funded research be made free to access immediately](#) - Times Higher Education

[\(Japan\) Open Access in Japan: Tapping the Stone Bridge](#) - Scholarly Kitchen

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## The Code Breaker book review

Erich von Detze

Looking for some light reading, I stumbled on this book through my local library and was hooked from the first chapter to the last.

Sooner or later, most HREC members will find themselves reviewing research which involves or depends on some level of genetic work (DNA, RNA etc). Scientific and technical members of HRECs are generally well equipped to review this research but lay members and those from other disciplines can frequently feel out of their depth. While written for an entirely different purpose, this book assists to fill some important gaps of understanding without attempting to turn those HREC members into professional scientists.

Isaacson is a professor of history and has written several books including contemporary histories of science and technology. He writes in a punchy, direct, style which educates his reader about the field he is investigating and maintains interest along the entire journey.

This book is based on many hours of active interviews with the key characters as well as their students and staff, access to laboratories and attendance at conferences and events. Isaacson immersed himself in the field to enable him to impart a clear and concise understanding to his reader and was clearly present during some of the recent applications of the CRISPR technology (used for gene editing), even learning the laboratory techniques for himself. The book also advances our understanding of the key contribution of women to science in this particular field.

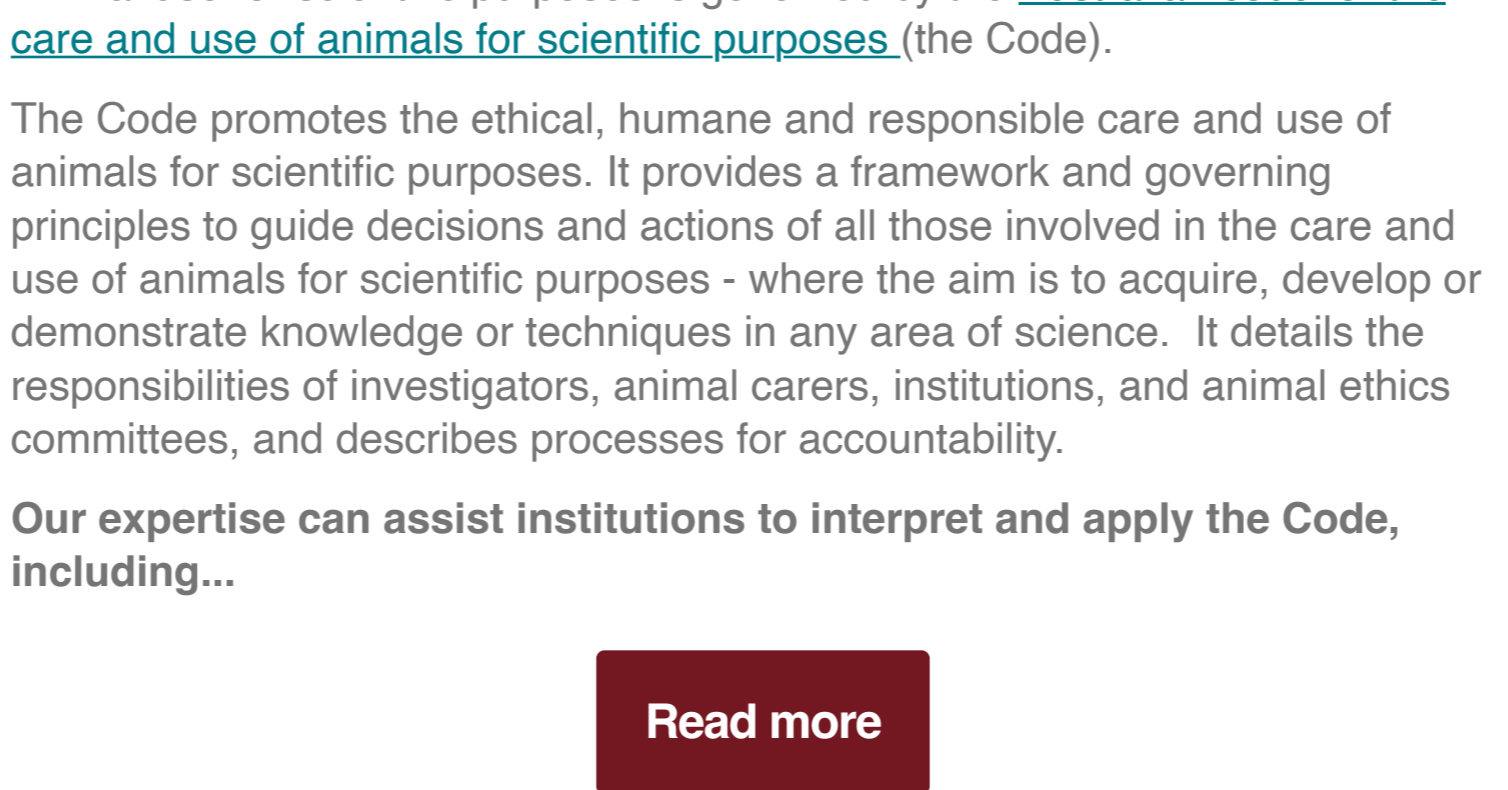
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## Fishbowl

A fun alternative to the typical professional development for research ethics committee members is to have an experienced person facilitate a fishbowl review. Committee members are paired off and one half of the committee (one from each pair) reviews and deliberates on a mock research ethics application, including considering what feedback should be sent to the applicant. They do so while the other half of the committee observes silently. The observers then provide feedback to their paired reviewers. Then the two halves switch roles for the review of another mock application.

We have facilitated a few such fishbowls. They are fun way to practice the difficult craft of research ethics review and experiment with behaviour that might be new for the committee (e.g. in Australia discussing the Elements in [Chapter 3.1 of the National Statement](#) and pivoting to the core principles).

Contact us at [enquiry@ahrecs.com](mailto:enquiry@ahrecs.com) if you would like to discuss AHRECS facilitating a fishbowl exercise for your committee. This can be done remotely, saving travel expenses and could be inserted into an in-house activity that you are planning for your committee as part of the professional development required by HRECs registered with the NHMRC.



## AHRECS expands to encompass animal ethics

Amanda Fennie

We are committed to excellence in animal wellbeing and assisting institutions to meet and exceed their regulatory compliance obligations.

Animal use for scientific purposes is governed by the [Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes](#) (the Code).

The Code promotes the ethical, humane and responsible care and use of animals for scientific purposes. It provides a framework and governing principles to guide decisions and actions of all those involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes - where the aim is to acquire, develop or demonstrate knowledge or techniques in any area of science. It details the responsibilities of investigators, animal carers, institutions, and animal ethics committees, and describes processes for accountability.

Our expertise can assist institutions to interpret and apply the Code, including...

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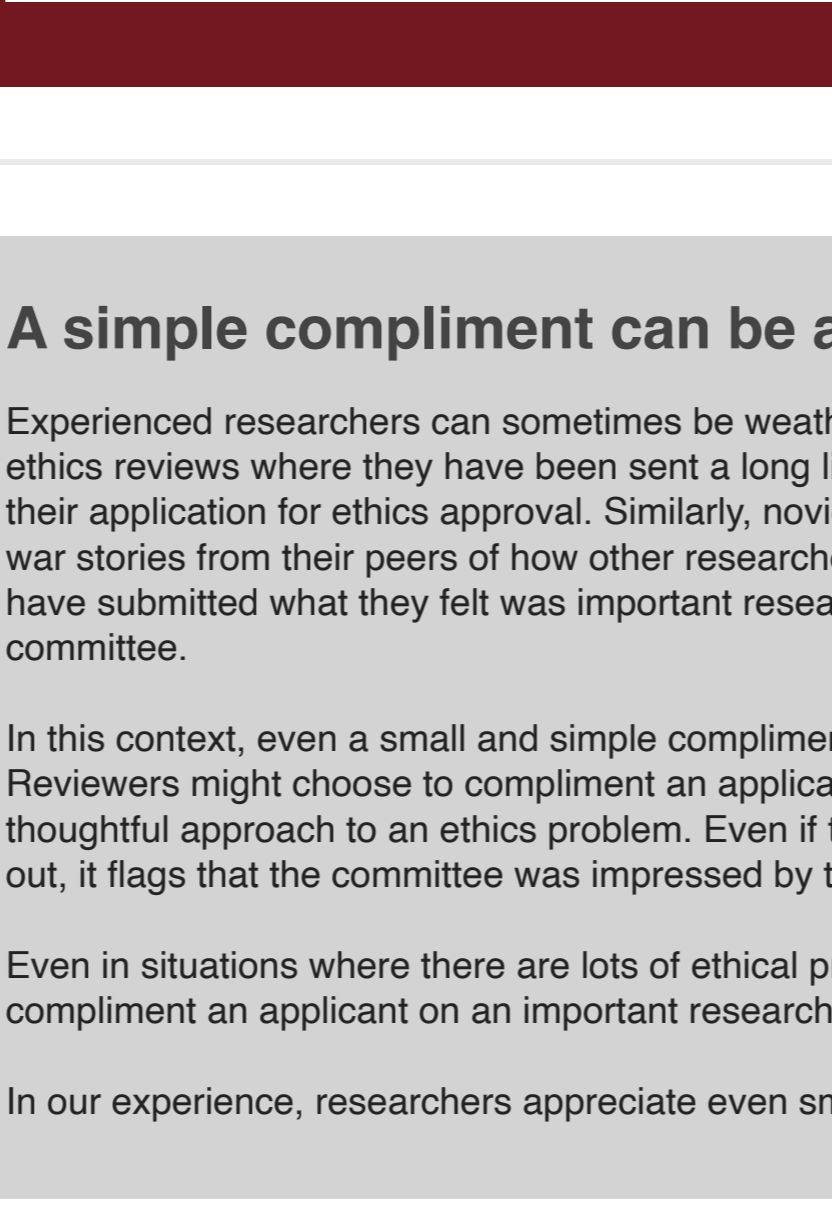
## -Why spot the error is a dangerous way to train a committee member

Over the last few decades, members of the AHRECS team have designed and delivered professional development activities for the NHMRC and other bodies. At first, these typically involved committee members reviewing mock applications to find what is wrong with them. Individuals 'won' if they found a complex problem that no other attendee spotted. It was reminiscent of a competition run in British newspapers through the 1970s called 'Spot the Ball'.

We now regret our involvement in the design and delivery of such workshops because they reinforced to new and experienced committee members that their job is to find what is wrong with an application and to tell the applicant what they must do to fix their flawed project.

Such thinking is at the core of the unhelpful dynamic between researchers and committees: it also reinforces that ethics review is adversarial (Israel et al., 2016) with the objective of shielding participants from reviewers. It also has the unhelpful message that documents like the National Statement are a set of rules that researchers must comply with.

Israel, M., Allen, G. & Thomson, C. (2016) Australian Research Ethics Governance: Putting the Demise of the Adversarial Culture. In van den Hoonaard, W. & Hamilton, A. (eds) *The Ethics Rupture: Exploring Alternatives to Formal Research-Ethics Review*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. pp285-316.



## A simple compliment can be a powerful thing

Experienced researchers can sometimes be weathered veterans of bruising research ethics reviews where they have been sent a long list of things they need to do to 'fix' their application for ethics approval. Similarly, novice researchers may have heard war stories from their peers of how other researchers have been savaged when they have submitted what they felt was important research for review by a research ethics committee.

In this context, even a small and simple compliment can have a significant impact. Reviewers might choose to compliment an applicant on a novel, effective or thoughtful approach to an ethics problem. Even if there are still some details to iron out, it flags that the committee was impressed by the applicant's new approach.

Even in situations where there are lots of ethical problems, a committee could compliment an applicant on an important research topic or question.

In our experience, researchers appreciate even small compliments.

## While you are here...

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A few profiled items from the subscribers' area:

01. Who is he? - Human Research Ethics (clinical trials) commentary
02. Ethical and responsible recruitment of researchers - A Research Integrity-Human Research Ethics commentary
03. A warm up activity - A Human Research Ethics discussion activity
04. Acting on 'soft' research misconduct - A Research Integrity commentary
05. Chasing a non-responsive researcher - A Human Research Ethics commentary
06. How to avoid passive-aggressive mischief in a lab - A Research Integrity commentary
07. You have been screened - A Human Research Ethics commentary
08. The role and recognition of advisors/technicians/assistants in human research - A Human Research Ethics commentary
09. Blinding and a trial that was too successful - A Human Research Ethics commentary
10. You can't sue us mechanism - A Human Research Ethics discussion activity

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- University of Melbourne
- University of Technology Sydney

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## Things You May Have Missed...

### Our Newsroom

01. The Alarming Rise of Predatory Conferences - Eos
  02. (USA) NIH Fails to Enforce Rules for Reporting Clinical Trial Results - The Scientist
  03. (USA) US orders publicly funded research be made free to access immediately - Times Higher Education
  04. (Australia) Hydroxychloroquine in Australia: a cautionary tale for journalists and scientists - Reuters Institute
  05. How to make your research reproducible - Nature
  06. (UK) Academics must speak up about research that could cause harm - Times Higher Education
  07. Who Cares About Publication Integrity? - Scholarly Kitchen
  08. Opening the Black Box of Peer Review - Physics
  09. World's top journals 'limiting critiques' - Times Higher Education
  10. Our Societies, Journals, and the Narrative of Accessibility and Equity in Open Research - Scholarly Kitchen
- There were more than 115 more great items in the last 90 days. Follow us on social media to get an alert when new items are added ([LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#))

### Our Resource Library

01. The Science and Politics of Journal Retractions: A conversation with Ivan Oransky - Retraction Watch
02. (Australia) Research with Indigenous people - procedural and practical ethical context - YouTube
03. (Australia) The Essence Of Ethics For Psychological Researchers And Psychologists - e-course Extract
04. Consent Webinar (40 minutes) - YouTube
05. (Australia) Gaining access - warming the ground - YouTube
06. (Australia) What are the most common reasons for return of ethics submissions? An audit of an Australian health service ethics committees - Papers
07. Research ethics: theory and practice by Helen Kara - YouTube
08. Promoting trust in research and researchers: How open science and research integrity are intertwined - Preprint Papers
09. Violation of research integrity principles occur more often than we think - Papers
10. The new normal? Redaction bias in biomedical science - Papers