

10 May 2007 Hotline for medical research conduct in the UK is launched under embargo until 11 May 2007 00:01 GMT

The UK Panel for Research Integrity in Health and Biomedical Sciences will today (11 May 2007) launch a new confidential information and advice telephone line for those involved in issues relating to misconduct in research.

The Panel, which promotes good practice in biomedical research and was launched last April, hopes the telephone line will help provide guidance in the proper handling of allegations of research misconduct within universities, the NHS and industry.

Dr Andy Stainthorpe, Project Director and Head of the Research Integrity Office, said: "The telephone line is a quick and straightforward way of putting people in touch with the experts, and will of course be totally confidential. The Research Integrity Office will provide the caller with guidance in the first instance and will refer them, if needed and if the caller agrees, to an expert adviser from the Panel."

Professor Michael Farthing, Chairman of the UK Panel Planning Group and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Medicine, University of London, said: "The level of interest has steadily grown since we launched last year but there is still a need to publicise the fact that such an outlet exists for the research community.

"As we have said before, such cases are relatively rare, but the consequences of misconduct in research are significant in terms of human and financial costs.

"A number of cases recently have underlined the importance of having the Panel in place and the help line is another step in providing an independent and confidential service to those who suspect research misconduct."

The help line will be staffed by the Research Integrity Office from 8am - 8pm, Monday to Friday. Callers will be able to leave a message if they ring outside these hours.

The help line is an 0844 number (0844 77 00 644) and will cost the caller 3p per minute from a BT landline.