

Signs, Symptoms, and Situations of Moral Distress During the Pursuit of Research Excellence

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Moral distress occurs when researchers experience emotional suffering or anguish during product development when scientific procedures appear to conflict with one's personal values or obligations.

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Moral Distress in Research and Drug Development

- Data from an internal ethics consultation service at a large pharmaceutical company indicate that researchers are experiencing moral distress
- Programs to support researchers experiencing moral distress are limited to non-existent
- Research integrity ecosystem must include recognizing and addressing moral distress in researchers

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Signs, Symptoms, and Situations of Moral Distress

Signs and Symptoms of Moral Distress

- Frustration, Withdrawal, Powerlessness, Anger, Sadness, Decreasing job satisfaction and burnout
- Physical illness

Situations Triggering Moral Distress in Drug Development include:

- Drug Access/Equity issues
- Research in Vulnerable Populations
- Study termination
- Animal or Stem Cell Research

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Recommended Safeguards to Protect Against Moral Distress

- Ethics consultation using RESTORE method
- Journaling
- Support Networks: peer-to-peer sharing of experiences and group debriefs
- Education: recognizing and naming moral distress; training and education on ethical principles and best practices; intranet page on moral distress for employees.



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