

# Scientists as Responsible Members of Society

Being a responsible scientist involves more than conducting high quality research that is accurate, reliable, and reproducible.

## WHY ARE SCIENTISTS RESPONSIBLE TO SOCIETY?



1

**PUBLIC FUNDING:** Scientists receive support from society through public funds (via education, grants, universities). They have an obligation to provide public benefits in return.

2

**PUBLIC TRUST:** Public support relies on trust. Research that causes harm, mismanaged funds, or failure to produce societal benefit may endanger public trust in science.

3

**IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH:** Research implications may be hard to anticipate. Research may be used in unexpected or harmful ways by others.

### SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

#### Provide Benefits

- Do the benefits of my research outweigh the harms?
- Does my research address an important societal issue?

#### Avoid Harms

- What are the implications of my research?
- Is there potential for unintended consequences of my research?
- Have I considered the environmental impact?

#### Prevent Misunderstanding

- Can I help avoid public misunderstanding?
- Do I avoid communicating with the public because it is too "difficult"?

**FURTHER READING:** Shamoo and Resnik 2015 "Responsible Conduct of Research"; Peter Herrlich 2013 "The Responsibility of the Scientist" *J Microbiol Biol Educ*; Elisabeth Pain 2013 "The Social Responsibilities of the Scientist" *Science*