

BMAT ESSAY

2017, Q2



TIMING ⌚ 30m

MORAL OBLIGATION OF SCIENTIST

The only moral obligation a scientist has is to reveal the truth.

What is the reasoning behind this statement? Present an argument to the contrary. To what extent do you agree that the only moral duty a scientist has is to reveal the truth?



ESSAY PLAN

BMAT ESSAY MORAL OBLIGATION OF SCIENTIST

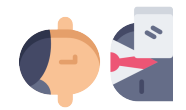
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WHAT IS THE REASONING BEHIND THIS

- Scientists have to always remain objective and they have a responsibility to provide factual data which has not been externally influenced
- This is the 'moral' thing to do because if research was subject to bias it would cause a lot of undue controversy and question the legitimacy of the scientific methodology
- We rely on science for new treatments and causative links between potentially hazardous activities.
- If scientists falsified information they would be abusing their power for the wrong reasons
- Science has a responsibility to disprove statements that people believe to be true



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ARGUE TO THE CONTRARY

- Science does have a responsibility to remain objective however it is unfair for it to have an obligation to do so. This would restrict the freedom of scientists' to carry out experiments. For example, many carry out research because they enjoy it and have interest rather than an obligation.
- Scientists can be corrupted with personal gain and other vested interests ignoring the moral obligation they should have for recognition, power and prestige. For example, Wakefield abused his position to falsify evidence and suggest that there is a link between MMR and Autism
- Questionable whose role it is to give scientists responsibility. For example, in WW2 scientists contributed to the work of nuclear warfare and also concentration camps. They had an obligation to serve their government but was it moral?



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TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE?

- The responsibilities of scientists are not as clear-cut as those associated with say law or medicine, where the aim underpinning the profession is more clearly defined.
- To maintain the respect and integrity of the profession, honesty, public awareness and peer assessment is an essential responsibility that scientists must execute in their work if they are to maintain public support and trust.
- Research is carried out for many reasons - it is not always to reveal the truth but to disprove other 'truths'. For example, we discovered that the 'plum pudding model' was wrong through research into atomic structure. Here we were not revealing the truth but disproving the otherwise 'believed truth'
- Many will argue that the responsibility of scientists is to obtain useful knowledge in such a manner that will not cause any distress, harm or detriment to those involved with the experimentation that acquires the knowledge.

