

### **Ethical aspects**

Since implementing the doctoral schools at the University of Santiago de Compostela, there has been an accumulation of experience on the information contained in the theses on this area. During this time great differences have been detected on how the ethical aspects have been addressed in different theses. Due to the nature of the public document of the doctoral theses and the special importance that the ethical aspects have in this field of health sciences, the Board of Directors Committee of the Doctoral School in Health Sciences at the University of Santiago de Compostela has decided to address the following guidelines on the incorporation of ethical aspects in the doctoral theses presented at this school.

- Those theses that include studies that must count on the approval of an ethics research committee will have to specify that they have such approval, with the study register code in the material and methods section. It is advisable to include a copy of the favourable report to the documentation attached to the thesis. It is to be noted that, they must count on the approval of an ethic committee, generally speaking, all the studies completed in the field of biomedicine and which involve human beings, their samples or personal data.
- If the thesis uses human, embryonic or induced stem cells, the corresponding authorisation must be stated with its reference. It is also advisable to include the authorisation in the documentation attached to the thesis.
- If the thesis, due to its design, comes under the definition of clinical testing with medicine and/or health products it must count on the authorisation of the Spanish Medicine and Health Products Agency before its start, which must be stated in material and methods. It is advisable to include a copy of the authorization in the documentation attached to the thesis.
- For the studies based on the utilisation of existing information and which do not contain data of a personal nature, that is to say, based on anonymous information, it will be specified in the Thesis that the information complies with those characteristics and therefore the study does not need the prior evaluation and report from the ethic research committee.
- The theses that include studies experimenting with animals will include in the Materials and Methods section the reference to the legislation in force in that matter, as well as the following information:
  - The number of authorisations of the animal experimenting project under which the thesis was done. It is advisable to attach a copy of the authorisation to the documentation of the thesis.
  - The authorised user centre in which the work was done, indicating, if it is a Spanish centre, its REGA registration number.
  - It is advisable to attach a copy of the training certificate (according to the law ECC/566/2015) of the doctorate candidate in the documentation attached to the thesis. If the work with animals has not been done by the doctorate candidate this circumstance must be stated in the Materials and Methods section, indicating the person/people, company or service who completed it.
- The theses will include a sentence which will indicate if there are potential conflicts of interest by the author.
- The theses presented as a compilation of articles will have a specific mention of the ethical aspects (for example, in an annex), where all the references of the corresponding authorisations will be included. As in the other theses, it is advisable to include the copies of the authorisations in the documentation attached to the thesis.

## Non-original images

A thesis is a publication which in the end will have an ISBN and will be registered. Even if it is unusual to have a commercial gain, it is possible to have one as the USC will include it amongst its publications.

It has been observed that many of the non-original figures of the doctoral theses are not referenced and there is no reference made to their copyright. Taking into account the explained, attention is drawn to the fact that the non-original figures must specify their origin and obtain the appropriate permissions if necessary, adding the mode of legal use at the bottom of the figure.

As **help**, explain that to legally use an external figure there are four possibilities:

- Some publishers specify among their regulations that their figures can be used if certain conditions are complied with without asking for permission. If this is the case, it must be specified in the footnotes (Permitted by –WRITE THE PUBLISHER - ...)
- Ask permission: In many publishers or Scientific Societies owners of the copyright, in the electronic version of a figure in an article there is an immediate link which leads to a form to apply for the use. In general, it is issued immediately (a reply in approx. 24 hours) when there is no direct commercial use. (It must then be specified at the bottom of the figure: Permitted by -WRITE THE PUBLISHER -)
- There is an exception in the law of Copyright, when only small fragments of a complete figure are used and are modified substantially. (It must be quoted as "Modified of " ...WRITE QUOTE..." but the fragment must be very small, because there have already been lawsuits in this respect)

Apart from the above, an alternative possibility exists where free figures are used ("free", Open Access or with a Creative Commons licence (kind of all the Plos One for example)). There are various data bases which contain medical images where the convenient ones can be found. For example, in the NIH, the **Open-1** has a search engine which even allows to choose figures according to the type of licence chosen by its authors (Share-alike would probably be the appropriate one here). (Must be specified at the bottom of the figure: Creative Commons Licence or CC)