

## Social media savvy— Think before you tweet!

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Manager of Regulatory Compliance and Risk Management  
ACM Medical Laboratory

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by Kelly M. Willenberg, MBA, BSN, CCRP, CHRC, CHC

# “Fish or cut bait.”

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Willenberg

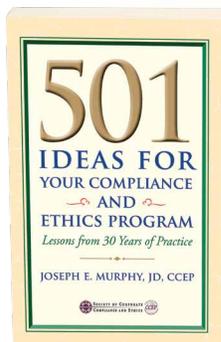
Many years ago, I worked with a pediatric oncologist at Vanderbilt named Dr. Jim Whitlock. I still consider him one of the greatest doctors I have had the privilege to work with. He is with The Hospital for Sick Kids in Toronto now. I still envision him commenting on indecisiveness with the line “Fish or cut bait.” Today, I see how uncertainty can be detrimental to a site or sponsor that handles the daily decisions in the complexities of research compliance.

The challenges are immense. Knowing what to do, who will do it, and who will prepare to do it are all at the forefront in moving compliance issues forward. Faced with increasing burdens in regulatory compliance and a higher need for expert staff, research compliance officers are often at a loss when making choices. Deciding whether they will “fish or cut bait” may involve swift decision-making by naïve staff.

The findings in research are vast—from scientific misconduct, conflict of interest, scrutiny of federal awards, human subject

protection, physician compensation arrangements, and reimbursement and billing compliance. The list goes on and on for a research compliance officer. Acting on all matters is demanding, with some feeling the burden of personal liability. Lead so others will follow, or just decide to get out of the way. Do not be the research compliance officer who has promised to act, but never does. Either help or make decisions to move forward, or just be honest with yourself that you are not going to do so. Recently a compliance officer said to me, “I am tired of not having support from the C-suite. My heart is not in it anymore. I just want someone to act like they understand how hard this role is.” If you have compliance staff, think about the responsibilities they carry. Empower them to have authority to do the job at hand without having to procrastinate, pondering what reaction they will receive to decisions that were made.

Encourage your research compliance officer to cut the bait, go fishing, and catch the fish. All is equally important in the treacherous waters of research compliance. That way, nobody will need to be told to “Fish or cut bait,” but rather “Cast the line and see what we get!” ☺



## 501 IDEAS FOR YOUR COMPLIANCE AND ETHICS PROGRAM

### *Lessons from 30 Years of Practice*

Author Joe Murphy has compiled the most effective ideas that he and other compliance professionals have tried.

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