

## Truth Telling: A Theoretical Reflection on "Incidental Findings" in Research Biobanks

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### Abstract

**Background:** In research biobanks, the obtained findings are sometimes beyond the prediction of researchers. They have not noticed and foreseen that part of findings and results at the beginning. In particular, when those findings are not pleasing, this question arises whether the researchers should inform the donor of tissue and sample or act in a way as if such findings have never been obtained.

**Methods:** In this research, which is based on analysis at the levels of moral philosophy and philosophy of rights, primary and secondary texts, and then opinions and views have been studied and analyzed in order to reach certain answer to the questions. This study is mainly about research biobanks, though results and findings of this research also apply to other kinds of biobank.

**Results:** Various opinions in agreement or disagreement with truth telling—such as those based on nonmaleficence, beneficence, autonomy or right not to know—have been put forward, which all suffer from theoretical shortcomings. It is not possible to base the moral principle on them or challenge it.

**Conclusion:** In this study, more than anything, the concept of virtue was emphasized in order to show that truth telling is a moral virtue and its opposite, *i.e.* withholding truth, is a vice. Thus, proposing reasons and claims under, *inter alia*, the title of interest for withholding the truth does not make it moral, as white lie is always an immoral act and the vague and elastic qualification of "white" cannot remove its moral evilness. Considering the act of truth withholding or lying as moral acts derives from the confusion between theoretical concepts of "rights" and "morality". Accordingly, the moral obligation of researchers or the biobank is truth telling, rather than withholding it. It is not possible to defend "withholding truth" as a moral duty.

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