

# Pilot program aims to improve reproducibility, utility, and ethics of biomedical research

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Addressing the widespread concern over transparency and reproducibility in biomedical research, one of the largest institutions in

German science has begun to provide a framework, interventions, and incentives for improving the quality and value of translational research. The program is described by its leader, Ulrich Dirnagl of Berlin Institute of Health (BIH), and colleagues in a new article publishing on February 11 in the open-access journal *PLOS Biology*.

Despite the progress of modern biomedical science and approval of new drugs, there is a wide and growing recognition that the practice of [biomedical research](#) has significant weaknesses that lead to exorbitant waste, failed "breakthrough" treatments, and inability to replicate "landmark" findings. To address these concerns, the Berlin Institute of Health founded the QUEST Center for Transforming Biomedical Research, which developed the [quality improvement program](#). The QUEST Center is implementing the program in BIH's two member institutions, Charité- Universitätsmedizin Berlin and the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine.

The program offers training, tools, and incentives to researchers to improve the quality of research, based on the principles of trustworthiness, usefulness, and ethics. For instance, the Center offers courses in reducing bias in research design, provides a guide to publishing negative or inconclusive findings, and offers financial rewards for making data publicly available. Program evaluations are ongoing and will be published in the near future.

"Conceptually, we are conducting and evaluating a large-scale behavior change intervention," said Dirnagl. "While such changes at a single [institution](#) can have little effect by themselves, we hope this program can provide a model for widespread adoption by other research institutions globally."

**More information:** Strech D, Weissgerber T, Dirnagl U, on behalf of QUEST Group (2020) Improving the trustworthiness, usefulness, and

ethics of biomedical research through an innovative and comprehensive institutional initiative. *PLoS Biol* 18(2): e3000576.  
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