Research containers are a potential silver bullet to data access issues

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PROBLEM: Australian health studies are being delayed and abandoned

- Barriers to accessing Australian health due to privacy concerns
- Researchers waste time on frustrating bureaucratic processes
- Time and financial costs of legal processes and legislation
- Important research questions remain unanswered
- National study of vaccines took five years of paperwork to obtain the data [1]

SOLUTION: Research containers

- Combine dummy data and research containers to allow researchers to **safely analyse data**

BENEFITS

✓ **Secure**: Researchers never see the real data and the data never leaves its secure location

✓ **Efficient**: Greatly reduced bureaucracy around ethical clearances

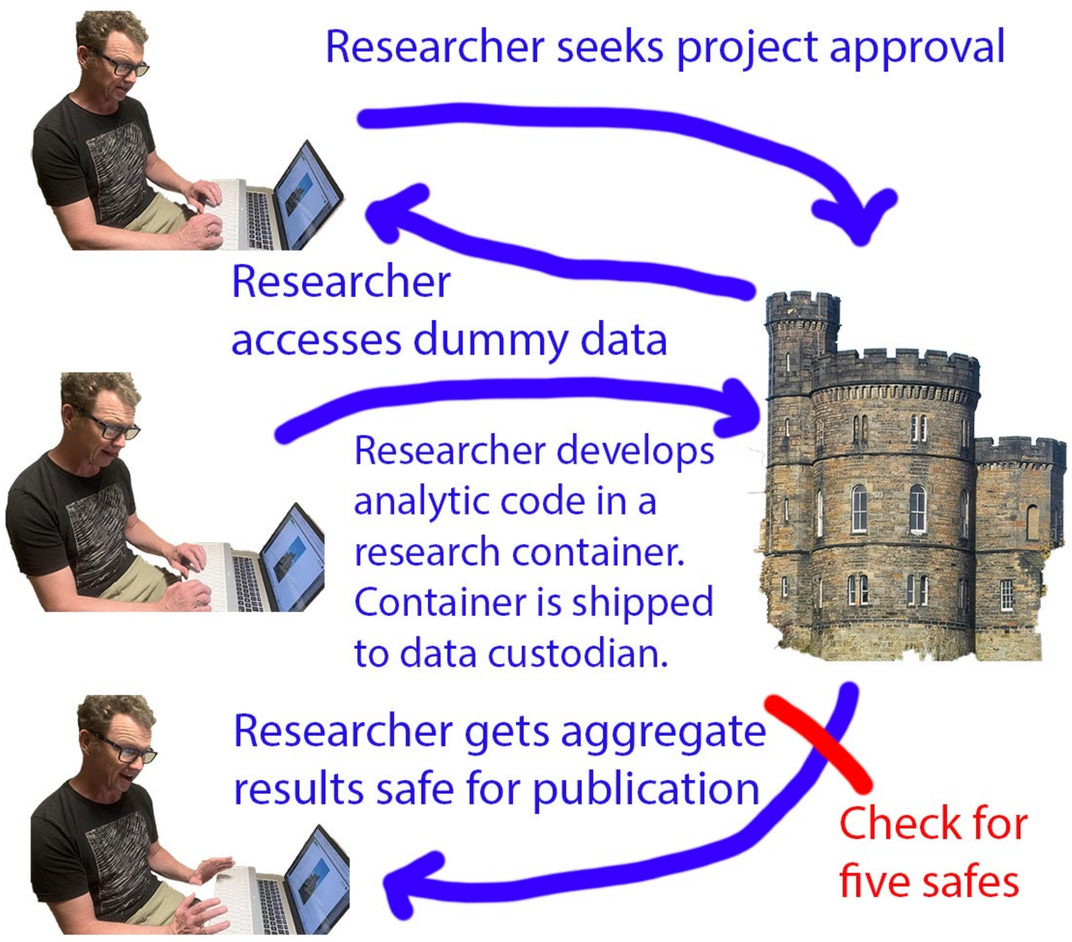
✓ **Reproducible**: Code and research plans are open

POTENTIAL BARRIERS

✗ **New skills needed** for researchers and data custodians in using research containers

✗ **Changed workflows** for researchers, and data custodians who need to clear results.

✗ Upfront **costs** to establish system



IN ACTION: UK's OpenSafely

- The UK's OpenSafely group have allowed researchers to safely analyse the health records of over 17 million NHS patients, with 155 research projects in 4 years
- Endorsed by citizens juries, patient groups, and privacy campaigners

Reference

1. Duszynski et al (2019). Process trumps potential public good: Better vaccine safety through linked cross-jurisdictional immunisation data in Australia. DOI: 10.1111/1753-6405.12929

Acknowledgements

Castle photo by Hannah Wright on Unsplash.

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