When things go wrong: A systematic approach to determining the integrity of multiple publications

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Retraction

Retraction statement: treatment of articulatory dysfunction in Parkinson's disease using repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation

First published: 18 September 2013  Full publication history

DOI: 10.1111/ene.12276  View/save citation

Cited by (CrossRef): 0 articles  Check for updates  Citation tools ▼

This article corrects:

Retracted: Treatment of articulatory dysfunction in Parkinson's disease using repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation
Volume 19, Issue 2, 340-347, Article first published online: 4 October 2011

The retraction has been agreed due to the findings of a formal investigation by the University of Queensland, which has established that: no primary data can be located; and no evidence has been found that the study described in the article was conducted. The University has requested that the paper be retracted.
The fabrication and falsification was dramatic and serious.

Was this an isolated incident?

Were other publications compromised?

Was there further unidentified risk for the University?
How many publications needed to be considered?

Author 1  ~333 papers
Author 2  23 papers (All included Author 1)
Decision tree 1:
High risk papers
Author 1 and Author 2

- Paper listed in PubMed and Scopus? (333)
- Published between 2007 and 2013? (92)
- Research focus (non-review)? (87)
- Author order?
Decision tree 1: High risk papers
Author 1
(excluded those with Author 2)

Author order 54

- Sole (2)
- First (4)
- Last (19)
- Middle (29)

Nil concern (methods/ commentary)

- Removed EJN & 1 review 2
- Excl. papers led by other labs and senior authors 9
- Excl. papers led by other labs and senior authors 7

Decision tree 1: High risk papers
Author 2
(including those with Author 1)

All papers incl Author 2 (23)

- Removed EJN 22
Decision tree 2: Ethical (IRB) approval

- Approval exists? 
  - NO: Breach

- Approval covers period of study? 
  - NO: Breach

- Approval covers all procedures? 
  - NO: Breach

- Protocol followed? 
  - NO: Breach

- No further action
Decision tree 3: Data integrity

Dataset exists?

- NO: Breach

Dataset complete & unmodified?

- NO: Breach

Data analysed and reported correctly?

- NO: Breach

No further action
Decision tree 4: Authorship

1. Do all authors qualify for authorship? NO → Breach
   YES → 2.

2. Are any eligible authors omitted? YES → Breach
   NO → 3.

3. Is the work of others acknowledged? NO → Breach
   YES → No further action
Decision tree 5: Funding source

1. Research sponsor acknowledged? → NO
   - Breach

2. Is attribution of sponsor correct? → NO
   - Breach

3. No further action

   Decisions:
   - Determine correct sponsor
   - Correct reporting to sponsor
   - Correct public record
At risk papers: Questions for co-authors

1. Do you recognise this paper/research?
2. Do you agree this is the work of the listed authors?
3. Are any eligible authors missing?
4. When was the research conducted?
5. Can you provide the ethics/IRB approval?
6. Were the data recorded and retained?
7. Is this a true and correct interpretation of the data?
8. Did you give permission for publication in this form?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 reviews with degrees of reliance upon EJN paper</th>
<th>No editorial action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 paper by Authors 1 &amp; 2 contained false statistics. Author 2 did not conduct the research.</td>
<td>1 Retraction</td>
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<td>1 paper plagiarized verbatim by Authors 1 &amp; 2 from rejected manuscript without knowledge, or inclusion, of original authors.</td>
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<td>4 papers derived verbatim from rejected manuscripts, published by Authors 1 &amp; 2 with partial knowledge and inclusion of some, but not all, original authors. Author order incorrect for all. Author 2 named as an author on all 4 without contribution to research - plagiarism.</td>
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<td>1 paper published with full knowledge of all authors, partially duplicated earlier paper published by Author 1 without knowledge or permission of all authors and with incorrect author order. Did not involve Author 2.</td>
<td>1 Retraction Second paper sound</td>
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Outcomes

Letters sent to editors of 11 publications in December 2013

Final correction to the public record was made in mid-2016

There were implications for research grants both awarded and those in application

Matter of public record – criminal convictions for fraud and attempted fraud – A first in Australia
Decision trees:

- Risk based
- Can be easily adaptable to specific circumstances
- Efficient mechanism to assess multiple papers
- Effective in identifying different categories of breaches
- Enable systematic, verified reporting of breaches to editors to support correction of the public record
Questions?

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