

Message

From: SACHS, ERIC S [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=171736]
Sent: 9/26/2012 7:40:17 PM
To: HEYDENS, WILLIAM F [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=230737]; SALTMIRAS, DAVID A [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=DASALT]; HAMMOND, BRUCE G [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=91757]; GOLDSTEIN, DANIEL A [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=527246]; VICINI, JOHN L [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=56908]; NEMETH, MARGARET A [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=21310]; LEMKE, SHAWNA LIN [AG/1000] [/O=MONSANTO/OU=NA-1000-01/cn=Recipients/cn=649549]
Subject: Chassy / Hayes

Take a deep breath then read on...

From: Chassy, Bruce M [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2012 2:38 PM
To: A. Wallace Hayes
Subject: Re: Séralini et al

Dr. Hayes

Actually it was not intended as a letter to the editor for publication. It was a heartfelt expression by a caring colleague who is deeply concerned.

I believe that the action you propose dignifies misconduct far beyond its due. My intent was to urge you to roll back the clock, retract the paper, and restart the review process.

It's high time that journals learn to admit it when they make a mistake. The paper in question has not been peer-reviewed. It has been given a free pass to credibility.

The journal has abdicated its responsibility to obtain a real review. Let's fix that first.

If you insist on pretending that the paper really was original research I will prepare a letter to the editor and resubmit it to you.

I will also continue to see redress. Failure of JFCT to retract the paper will force the community to be critical of the journal as well as the paper.

Best regards

Bruce

On Sep 26, 2012, at 12:10 PM, A. Wallace Hayes [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Dr. Chassy,

I am assuming your email is a letter to the editor and as such I am processing it by first sending it to the authors of the paper in question for their comments. Both your letter and their comments will be published together in a future issue of Food and Chemical Toxicology. If I receive no response from Dr. Seralini and his colleagues, your letter will be published alone.

Best wishes and thanks for your comments.

A. Wallace Hayes, PhD, DABT, FATS, FIBiol, FACFE, ERT
Harvard School of Public Health

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From: "Bruce M Chassy" [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]@ [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, September 26, 2012 1:58:56 PM
Subject: Séralini et al

Dear Dr. Hayes,

I am writing to you in regard to the recent release of a paper to be published in the Journal of Food and Chemical Toxicology:

Séralini, G.-E., et al. Long term toxicity of a Roundup herbicide and a Roundup-tolerant genetically modified maize. Food

Chem. Toxicol. (2012), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fct.2012.08.005>

I am certain that by now you are aware of the international furor that the publication has caused. The cleverly orchestrated release of the paper has already had profound impacts as, for example, the ban of NK603 maize in Russia. The vivid color photographs of rats with grotesque tumors will not easily be erased from the public psyche. More importantly, Séralini's mockery of science could have a profoundly negative impact on the journal, on the perceptions of the peer review process, and on science in general.

All of this is normally not the concern of authors, editors, reviewers and journals. Our task in science is to tell the whole truth as we know it in an unbiased and transparent manner and let the chips fall where they may. Competent peer-review, as you well know, is an essential ingredient to the objectivity and quality of science. The Elsevier journal policy very clearly spells out the responsibilities and roles of each of the aforementioned parties. I would submit that the process of peer-review has abjectly failed in this instance.

I will not take space here to detail the flaws in design, execution and analysis found in the paper in question. Perhaps the most important observation that can be made about the science is that the paper reports exactly what one might have expected to see for any similarly sized group of Sprague Dawley rats. There is simply nothing unusual about what is reported in the paper. There has been accordingly an outpouring of critical comment from the scientific community. My own thoughts on this topic can be found at:

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/henrymiller/2012/09/25/scientists-smell-a-rat-in-fraudulent-genetic-engineering-study/>

I have published in JFCT and I have served as a reviewer. I consider it a leading journal. I am very concerned that the journal has committed such a serious blunder. And I am in particular concerned that the journal has accepted a paper in which the authors have committed both scientific misconduct and have themselves documented unethical practices:

1. The authors violate publication ethics by not providing sufficient detailed information, including only selected information, and they compound the problem by refusing to release detailed information on protocols, materials, and results.

2. The treatment of animals is per se unethical. The animals should have been euthanized well before tumors reached 25% of their body weight. No useful information can be gained after the formation of a tumor is noted. These animals were forced to suffer for the sole purpose of producing evocative photographs.

Animal rules in the US state that rats are to be euthanized for humane when tumors reach 40 mm in diameter. Using the fingers in the photos as a scale, the rats in the photos can be seen to have larger tumors. This suggests they were allowed to live for sensational purposes, particularly when the paper failed to photograph the controls.

The European rules cited in the paper say "(d) the well-being and state of health of experimental animals shall be observed by a competent person to prevent pain or avoidable suffering, distress or lasting harm; (e) arrangements are made to ensure that any defect or suffering discovered is eliminated as quickly as possible. 4. All experiments shall be designed to avoid distress and unnecessary pain and suffering to the experimental animals. "

3. The Prof. Séralini fails to reveal conflicts of interest. His past record of now discredited papers and public criticism of GM crops speaks to extreme bias. Viewed in that light, his conduct is misconduct.

The failure to provide competent peer-review and to compound the problem by inaction on the part of the journal could well be interpreted as a violation of Elsevier's code of ethical conduct for journals and is in violation of the guidelines set forth by COPE to which Elsevier subscribes. The reasons for retraction of a paper are clearly spelled out. The two most important ones in this case are (from the COPE Retraction Guidelines):

"they have clear evidence that the findings are unreliable, either as a result of misconduct (e.g. data fabrication) or honest error (e.g. miscalculation or experimental error)"

"it reports unethical research"

JFCT therefore has an ethical obligation to retract the Séralini paper.

I sincerely hope that the journal will take immediate action by retracting the paper. It should be submitted to a real peer-review and, given the unusual circumstances, the journal and science might be well-served if more than the usual number of experts were enlisted for this task. I leave it to the journal to review its policies and procedures. I trust that you will be asking how this happened and what can be done to avoid a repetition of such a serious error. The journal may want to consider a change in editorial procedures and/or editorial staff.

Sincerely Yours

Bruce M. Chassy, PhD

Professor Emeritus of Food Safety

Professor Emeritus of Nutritional Sciences

FSHN, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign