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MEDICINE of THE HIGHEST ORDER

September 8, 2020

Editorial Office
Oncotarget

Re: Findings of research misconduct investigation

Dear Editorial Office:

I write to advise you of the findings of the University of Rochester's investigation into allegations of research misconduct involving 15 articles authored by Drs. Soo Ok Lee and Dr. Yuhchyan Chen. I appreciate your patience while the University completed its thorough investigation in the context of the ongoing global pandemic.

In brief summary, the Investigation concluded that there was no misconduct. There were no allegations of misconduct that implicated Dr. Chen at all based on her role in the research conducted in the lab, and while errors were found and acknowledged, there was no evidence to show that Dr. Lee acted with the requisite intent to falsify the research results. In particular, an allegation that Dr. Lee falsified a research experiment because she did not have access to a particular plasmid, was determined conclusively to be a false allegation.

However, the Investigation did note many errors in the published figures that were identified by the initial allegations set forth on pubpeer.com, additional allegations that came to light during the course of the Investigation, and that were acknowledged by Dr. Lee. Her explanation for the multiple errors can be summarized briefly as a the result of a faulty data management system and due to multiple experiments conducted in the same time frame, all resulting in the wrong images being published in figures in 13 separate articles published from September 2015 - September 2019.

Please note that the Investigation involved the following articles published in your Journal:

Duan et al., 2015

IL-6 signaling contributes to cisplatin resistance in non-small cell lung cancer via the up-regulation of anti-apoptotic and DNA repair associated molecules.

Oncotarget. 2015 Sep 29;6(29):27651-60. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.4753.

Duan S, Tsai Y, Keng P, Chen Y, Lee SO, Chen Y.

Lee et al., 2016

IL-6 promotes growth and epithelial-mesenchymal transition of CD133+ cells of non-small cell lung cancer.

Oncotarget. 2016 Feb 9;7(6):6626-38. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.6570.

Lee SO, Yang X, Duan S, Tsai Y, Strojny LR, Keng P, Chen Y.

Yang L et al., 2016

A FASN-TGF- β 1-FASN regulatory loop contributes to high EMT/metastatic potential of cisplatin-resistant non-small cell lung cancer.

Oncotarget. 2016 Aug 23;7(34):55543-55554. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.10837.

Yang L, Zhang F, Wang X, Tsai Y, Chuang KH, Keng PC, Lee SO, Chen Y.

Shen et al., 2017a

Radiation alters PD-L1/NKG2D ligand levels in lung cancer cells and leads to immune escape from NK cell cytotoxicity via IL-6-MEK/Erk signaling pathway.

Oncotarget. 2017 Jul 12;8(46):80506-80520. doi: 10.18632/oncotarget.19193.

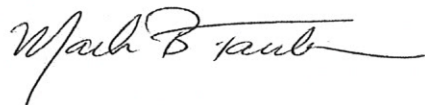
Shen MJ, Xu LJ, Yang L, Tsai Y, Keng PC, Chen Y, Lee SO, Chen Y.

The review of these four articles indicated that there were several errors acknowledged by Dr. Lee and requests have been made for a corrigendum to correct those errors. We agree with these requests as there was no finding of intent to falsify the research results.

To reiterate, there was no finding of misconduct associated with any of the 15 articles subject to the Investigation, but there were errors noted in 13 articles.

We hope that this letter and explanation will prove helpful to your Journal in making its decision[s] regarding the article[s] noted above. Please contact me with any further questions you may have regarding the Investigation and the findings associated with the article[s] published in your Journal.

Sincerely,



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cc: Gunta Liders, AVP Research Administration
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