



To our esteemed colleagues, researchers, and the broader scientific community,

We, Prof. Anca D. Buzoianu, Rector of the Iuliu Hațegianu University of Medicine and Pharmacy, and Prof. Dafin F. Muresanu, Chair of the Neurosciences Department of the Iuliu Hațegianu University of Medicine and Pharmacy, wish to address grave concerns that have been brought to our attention regarding several research papers we have co-authored between the years 2012-2023.

We have been made aware, primarily through discussions on the [PubPeer platform](#), that Prof. Hari Shanker Sharma and his research group at Uppsala University in Sweden have used highly similar, overlapping or incorrect images in numerous papers related to experimental animal models, raising justified concerns regarding the validity of the results. Of these papers, we have co-authored several as part of our collaborative work within the Foundation of the Society for the Study of Neuroprotection and Neuroplasticity (SSNN), funded by various international entities (e.g., NIH, Swedish government). A comprehensive list of flagged papers and our respective replies can be accessed [here](#).

While our involvement in these research papers aligns with the authorship criteria set by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (i.e., we have made substantial contributions to the work, critically reviewed it for intellectual content, approved the final versions to be published), the object of these allegations is entirely related to images/figures of experimental work performed outside our university. It is paramount to emphasize that we had neither implication in nor knowledge until today of these suspicions of misconduct. Our expertise does not encompass pathology, and as such, we had placed significant trust in the technical robustness and authenticity of the images provided by Prof. Sharma and his team, who conducted all related procedures in Sweden. Among the co-authors of these papers are world-leading pathologists, further cementing our trust in the validity of the presented results.

Beyond our comprehensive responses to comments on the PubPeer platform, we are issuing editorial notices for three manuscripts where we are the first authors. We have also requested that Uppsala University immediately address these allegations publicly.

The underlying issues presented in this situation highlight the broader challenges within the academic peer-review process. Peer review, while an essential component of scientific publication, is imperfect and occasionally prone to oversight. The very fact that discrepancies in our collaborative works went unnoticed for years, despite some concerns being voiced on platforms like PubPeer, underscores the need for continuous improvement in the review process. Additionally, the delays in acknowledging, addressing, and rectifying issues once they are identified point to systemic problems in the way academic journals handle post-publication concerns.

The academic community at large must recognize these challenges and actively seek solutions. We call for more rigorous peer review training, transparency in the review process, and faster mechanisms to address flagged concerns. Every researcher, reviewer, and academic journal has a shared responsibility to ensure the highest quality of research output. It is only through collective efforts that we can elevate the standards of academic publication and maintain public trust in scientific research.

We wholeheartedly support the retraction of any research proven to be compromised and advocate for comprehensive investigations into these allegations. Our primary goal is to uphold the pillars of scientific truth and integrity.

In the pursuit of transparency and accountability, we call upon the scientific community to collectively address and rectify the flaws in the peer-review process. We remain committed to advancing this cause and ensuring that research maintains its foundational integrity.

Sincerely,

Prof. Anca D. Buzoianu,
Rector

Prof. Dafin F. Muresanu,
Chair of the Neurosciences Department

Iuliu Hațegianu University of Medicine and Pharmacy

Foundation of the Society for the Study of Neuroprotection and Neuroplasticity (SSNN)

Date: 25th of October, 2023