

## Preliminary inquiry report into alleged RI violation

**Complainant:** Alexander Magazinov  
**Respondent:** Hanieh Shirvani  
**Preliminary investigator:** Lloyd Ruddock, Professor

The complaint describes notification of alleged violations of RI for two publications:

**Paper A:** Non-coding RNA in SARS-CoV-2: progress toward therapeutic significance. *International Journal of Biological Macromolecules* 222 (2022), 1538-1550

The complainant describes the notification of three alleged violations of RI:

- i. Reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misleading claims.
- ii. Manipulating authorship.
- iii. Expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations.\*

\* Note: This appeared as paper B in the notification form, but was detailed as being in paper A.

**Paper B:** MiR-211 plays a dual role in cancer development: From tumor suppressor to tumor enhancer. *Cellular Signaling* 101 (2023), 110504

The complainant describes the notification of two alleged violations of RI:

- i. Reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misleading claims.
- ii. Manipulating authorship.

During the preliminary investigation the complainant provided additional information (mainly in Chinese) of an alleged “pay to publish” scheme being operated by one of the editors (Prof Ziaoxiong Zeng) at the *International Journal of Biological Macromolecules* and the *Journal of Functional Foods*. This did not include evidence that either of the publications being investigated here had been purchased. A check of other University of Oulu publications in these journals did not reveal any evidence of other RI violations. In addition, during the preliminary investigation the complainant added an allegation of “Expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations” for paper B.

### Conclusion:

A full investigation is not required as the respondent admits that an RI violation has taken place for both publications, specifically that they purchased an authorship on both. They have initiated steps to have both publications retracted on this basis.

The preliminary investigation also concludes that all of the other alleged violations of RI have occurred, but that the respondent is not responsible for i) expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations or ii) reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misleading claims, as they did not write either manuscript.

While the purchase of authorship is a serious RI violation, the preliminary investigator notes that the respondent-initiated retraction of both publications by contacting the publishers, admitting the paid authorship and providing details of whom the payment was made to. This was done at some personal risk. This self-retraction and their clear contrition should be taken into account when considering any possible sanctions.

Lloyd Ruddock, Professor

Oulu, 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024