

A call for scientific integrity

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On April 20th 2017, *Tumor Biology* of Springer announced to retract 107 articles with peer-review fraud, mostly authored by more than 500 scientists from well-known universities and top hospitals in China. With its highest proportion and largest amount of involved papers, this scandal is the worst academic fraud in recent years in China, raising public outcry. Pitifully, this event is just like a breeze that only ripples the water, causing no storm nor shake in the pond of Chinese scientific and technologic circle, under which flushes the undercurrent of fickleness and greed. What's more incredible, some official websites respond with no efforts in the reflection and renovation in academy, but spearhead their attacks at the publishing company. They question the review system of the journal, and even complain about the injustice to the fraud makers by claiming that the title evaluation system pushes the doctors to abandon their moral compass and therefore the academic fraud is excusable. We notice that even the administrative department of the science and technology is partial to fraud makers, much cry and little done. This is deplorable.

Academic fraud is always a harm to scientific research. In recent years, cheat in academy is increasing in our country. If there is no exhaustive investigation, it will become an incurable disease which will seriously impede the realization of a scientific power. Countries around the world have been serious about such scandals. In 2005, the "Pride of Korea", Woo-suk Hwang, faked data in his paper, and ended up with his dismissal from all the posts. This "national hero" was brought down from the pedestal since then. In 2014, Japanese scientist Haruko Obokata fabricated STAP cell research. She was finally forced to resign and lost her Doctor's degree, her supervisor, also the co-author of the paper, Yoshiki Sasai, hanged himself under great pressure, and all the people involved in Haruko Obokata's dream

were severely punished. The two neighboring countries show tough attitudes toward scientific swindle, shouldn't we follow the example?

China is on the great journey of "national rejuvenation". Scientific and technological innovation is the base of a powerful country, and requires seeking truth from facts, allowing no dishonesty, especially academic misconduct. Confucius said: "If the people have no faith in their rulers, there is no standing for the state." Integrity is the foundation of a country. China has a long history of credibility culture, and the dream of development and strong nation is based on its people's persistent self-improvement. The achievement of atomic and hydrogen bombs and man-made satellites, as well as the recent flight and launch of CA919 and Type 001A aircraft carrier, is made by Chinese people's ingenuity and industriousness. Lured by the lust of position promotion, awards, fame and wealth, academic fakers throw away scientists' professional ethics and integrity, purchase papers, falsify data, and publish their articles on foreign magazines. This fatal misconduct severely damages China's reputation. If this can be tolerated, what cannot?

Academic fraud and favoritism will result in huge waste of educational and scientific research resources, and lead the scientific efforts to a wrong direction. In 2003, Professor Jin Chen of Shanghai Jiao Tong University faked chips, bringing huge loss to China's science and technology. Isn't this thought-provoking? If the unhealthy tendency of faking cannot be stopped, greed and desire will be rampant in scientific circle, faked papers will become a gate pass for fame seeker, and the strategic target of "rejuvenate the country through science and technology" will be buried in oblivion.

China's reform and opening-up is developing vigorously, and senior government leaders, with decisive resolution, are

leading people to push social and economic development. The unprecedentedly severe anti-corruption policy aims to crack down both tigers and flies. In 2016 in Liaoning Province, 454 Representatives of the Provincial People's Congress were involved in bribery in the election. President Jinping Xi strongly rebuked these illegal activities, and central government carried out strict investigation. Four provincial level officials were put into jail. Other representatives were subjective to the Party disciplines and state laws and forfeited the right to represent the people. No excuse and comprise for corruption, isn't this a good example? We hope the national department of science and technology can erect their back straight and be tough and resolute. Scientific misconduct should be punished severely, academic management should be normalized, and fraud makers should be cleaned out from research teams. And there should be credit records and big data for scientists to ensure a transparent scientific research. Academic field calls for breakthrough, the existing title evaluation system of science and education requires eliminating vice and exalting virtue, and administrative system needs thorough reform.

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Only this can establish a healthy academic environment, and make the diligent and honest scientist raise their heads up to stand on the international scientific stage.

We hope our peers with the same belief can remember Hippocratic Oath: "*I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing*". Be faithful, perseverant, and dedicative. Integrity is self-cultivation, generosity, a state of mind and a great spirit, which is the essence of a real life. We should practice honesty to demonstrate our personality, and integrate this virtue into national spirit to realize the great rejuvenation of China.

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Footnote

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