

After our manuscript was accepted by AJP, the Journal specifically asked us to clarify conflict of interests (COI) in terms of stock in its earlier letter to us. We clearly indicated that there was no any stock in Cytelligen and there was no related COI. Regarding job position, I have never been informed that author's job position may also relate to COI as indicated by one of the AJP editors in the last minute letter. The same editor also asked us why Cytelligen's scientific goal and capability described on our website was not released in the manuscript. Honestly, I still don't quite understand how it relates to COI. Though I thought such kind of issue due to my inexperienced unawareness could be resolved if it was addressed by the Journal in its earlier letter to us, it's my fault for not fully understanding AJP's publishing policy.

Regarding non-disclosing the source of the reagents, we all thought the aim of this manuscript is to introduce the novel concept and technology to readers, and we were careful to not make Cytelligen a primary emphasis in this manuscript because it's not acceptable to turn a very serious research report to a commercial advertisement-like report. Our another study previously published on Oncotarget clearly indicated that Cytelligen was the vendor for related reagents, and that paper was cited several times in this AJP manuscript.

We appreciate that the incorrect image of Fig. 2B was indicated by the editor in our this uncorrected proof of manuscript. That image is indeed the lung cancer CTC previously published by us in CCA. When one of coauthors prepared the Figure 2B for AJP manuscript, she mistook the image from the lung cancer folder which was shared with our collaborator, instead of our colon cancer folder, which was sorted by combined time and tumor as well as CTC classification. As one of coauthors, I'm very sorry for not being able to help find out such obvious mistake in time due to my carelessness, and we have to take the consequences of carelessness. But frankly, editor of AJP also accidentally made a mistake by mistranslating our frequently used key abbreviation of in situ PKC (in situ Phenotyping and Karyotyping of CTC) into a well known but irrelevant in situ "Protein Kinase C" assay, which indeed bothered many readers who read our manuscript on the AJP website. We indicated it to the Journal, and I thought we might have the equal opportunity to the Journal to correct whatever mistakes made by either the Journal editor or us in this author's uncorrected proof.

Regarding Fig. 3C, according to reviewer's suggestion showing comparison of sensitivity of the technology described in this paper vs *CellSearch*, we provided additional data obtained in our previous studies performed on gastric cancer patients which was published by us on Oncotarget and cited several time in this AJP manuscript. The reason for keeping the particular *CellSearch* image (the reference image) identical to the one previously shown in *Oncotarget* is that we don't want to mislead people to think that the entire new experiment other than our previous study was conducted. Plenty of CellSearch images were collected during the study. If AJP editor told us it's not appropriate to still stay on that particular CellSearch image, we certainly could make a change according to editor's recommendation in our this author's uncorrected proof.

As one of coauthors, I expressed my apology for the confusion brought to the editors and even the manuscript corresponding author due to my inexperienced unawareness and carelessness for not being able to identify the incorrect image. I appreciated AJP's indication. It's a good lesson for

me to learn from this "tragedy", and to realize what carefulness and responsibility means to every coauthor.

Because the unique advantage of the technology described in this manuscript has been confirmed on many cancer patient samples, and it helped doctors a lot to identify circulating tumor cells with higher sensitivity and specificity comparing to the conventional techniques (some of these results have been published on different journals), We would like to share our experience with colleagues, and would like to re-submit our manuscript revised according to AJP editor's indication.