

**Authors' remorse: Researchers retract paper so they can publish it in a journal with a higher impact factor**

**RETRACTED**



via Derek Markham/Flickr

Some researchers evidently have never heard the term “no backsies.” The authors of a paper on spine surgery have retracted the article because, well, they were fickle.

**RETRACTED**

We'll explain.

The paper, “Limited post-operative dexamethasone use does not affect lumbar fusion: a single institutional experience,” was published last June in the *Journal of Spine Surgery* by a team from Rush University in Chicago and a colleague from the University of Cincinnati.

The JSS is a quarterly which is indexed in PubMed Central — but not PubMed, an important distinction — but doesn't have an impact factor from Clarivate Analytics' Web of Science — a fact that appears to have given the researchers authors' remorse. But you wouldn't know it from the retraction notice, which reads:

**RETRACTED**

*The article “Limited post-operative dexamethasone use does not affect lumbar fusion: a single institutional experience” (doi: 10.21037/jss.2018.05.20) that appeared on page 254–259 of the June 2018 issue of the Journal of Spine Surgery needs to be withdrawn for the authors' reason. We are sorry for the inconvenience caused.*

We asked the corresponding author, Owoicho Adogwa, of Rush, for an explanation but didn't hear back. But Ralph Mobbs, an Australian neurosurgeon and the editor-in-chief of the journal, told us what the “reason” was:

*My understanding is that they wished to reanalyse the data, and publish the revised data in a higher tier journal.*

When we said that move wasn't exactly cricket, Mobbs agreed:

*It is certainly not fair and reasonable to retract an article such as this. I suspect that one of the authors has put pressure on the others for submission into a higher tier journal.*

*As an editor in chief, I appreciate that the journal that I look after is a lower tier journal and there is publishing pressure to target more fancy journals!*

*The topic area however does not lend itself to concerns of conflict of interest. There are no fancy / expensive prosthesis used, nor do I believe that any author would be getting a financial incentive or cut from an article such as this.*

*Alas, it's just one of those annoying things that happens when you're trying to run a journal.*

While we haven't seen any cases exactly like this, there was the case of a journal that ended up retracting more than 400 papers at once — a record — because a scientific society demanded they do so. The reason? The journal had lost its impact factor because — wait for it — of “a large volume of content published in supplemental issues that was not consistent with the stated scope of the journal.”

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