

June 12, 2021

Ivan Oransky, MD

**VIA EMAIL**

(ivan-oransky@erols.com)

RE: Transcendental Meditation trademark and retraction

Dear Mr. Oransky:

Thank you for giving us an opportunity to respond to your additional concerns.

The Transcendental Meditation (TM) program, as I mentioned in my previous email, is a proprietary meditation program that is licensed to and taught exclusively by Maharishi Foundation USA, Inc. in the United States. While there are many forms of meditation techniques available today, contrary to common belief, there are many distinct differences between and among the various techniques, such as the training of the teachers, the instructional process, the manner of practice, the effort involved, their impact on the body, brain and mind, and the measureable effects. The scientific literature continues to articulate these differences and commonalities. However, the purported sharing of any one or more of these features, such as Automated Self Transcending Meditation (ASTM), should not be taken to mean the programs are the same, produce the same effects and certainly should not be the basis for describing them by the same name.

The retracted studies your publication notes concerned the Art of Living's SSM technique, not the Transcendental Meditation program. The studies themselves do not claim to involve the Transcendental Meditation program (though as noted below, the studies improperly seek to make the unsupported claim that because SSM is an Automatic Self Transcending Meditation (ASTM) they have similar benefits to the TM program). The headline in your article, therefore, that "Two studies on transcendental meditation have been retracted..." is inappropriate.

This conflation of the TM program and SSM is particularly inappropriate due to the Transcendental Meditation program's proprietary nature and the unique, uniform and highly controlled manner of teacher training, instruction and practice. The Foundation is the sole entity responsible for training, qualifying and licensing of TM teachers which involves a rigorous multi-month course. The program itself involves seven steps of instruction with introductory and instructional sessions and thereafter regular follow up and verification sessions all with trained and certified teachers. This all ensures proper and consistent practice of the TM technique under the Foundation's control.

The Foundation, however, exercises no control over the qualifications and training of teachers, the nature of the technique, the manner of teaching and the follow up sessions of other meditation practices. Whether or not these practices claim to be similar or the same or even share certain features, it would be irresponsible, therefore for any responsible publication to label them the same for scientific, or popular purposes. That is not to say that the differences or similarities should not be analyzed and studied. To the contrary, the Foundation very much supports rigorous review of the various techniques; a more sophisticated understanding of their respective effects, distinguishing and common, would be gained thereby which would certainly be of value in the scientific community and for the general public.

With regard to the meditation practice at issue, the Foundation possesses no knowledge of or control over the Art of Living SSM program referenced in the journal articles at issue. References or implications in those articles themselves and in your retraction to the effect that the studied technique is TM, or is the same as or similar to, or even can be claimed to produce the same effects as the TM program have no basis in fact and are improper. This is not helped by the claim of Art of Living that SSM is a type of ASTM. While we see no evidence this is true, even if it were, that does not entitle those who make the self-serving claim that their practice belongs in that general category of ASTM to claim, as Art of Living does, that their technique produces the same effects as the TM technique. It certainly does not entitle them or yourselves to call that technique Transcendental Meditation<sup>1</sup>.

While the Foundation and this Firm are constantly on the lookout for and forcefully pursue these and other infringements of its federally registered trademarks, sometimes wrongful uses escape the Foundation's attention. Such is the case in the two articles you attached to your email.

In conclusion, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and his Art of Living Foundation do not have any relationship with Maharishi Foundation or its Transcendental Meditation program, nor are they licensed or qualified to teach the Transcendental Meditation program and they do not claim to be doing that. There's no evidence that their SSM meditation program can even be fairly categorized in the ASTM-forms of meditation let alone support for enough similarity with the TM program that it has the same verifiable benefits or can be labeled as Transcendental Meditation.

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<sup>1</sup> ASTM was a phrase coined by Dr. Fred Travis and described in *Focused attention, open monitoring and automatic self-transcending: Categories to organize meditations from the Vedic, Buddhist, and Chinese Traditions*, *Consciousness and Cognition*, Vol 19, Issue 5 (2010). In the article, Dr. Travis propose a third category of meditation based on reported brain patterns exhibited by practitioners of the Transcendental Meditation program. While the author proposed ASTM as a generalized third category of meditation, there was nor has there been to date any research to suggest that all types of meditation that might fit this category have the same efficacy or benefits, let alone that they are all, in effect, the same as the Transcendental Meditation technique. Nor, to our knowledge, is there any research to support or suggest that SSM meditation even belongs in this third category.

I trust I've adequately addressed your concerns. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Sytsma", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JASON R. SYTSMA  
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