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SUNY
DOWNSTATE
Medical Center

University Hospital of Brooklyn
College of Medicine
School of Graduate Studies
College of Nursing
College of Health Related Professions
School of Public Health

December 20, 2016

Dear Mr. Patel,

We have completed the School of Graduate Studies inquiry into concerns relating to data and figures from your thesis project or other lab work. Initially, the School of Graduate Studies was presented with a PowerPoint file by the Office of Student Affairs with figures expressing the results of your work in progress. The concern raised was that each example contained clear signs of mishandling.

Our first step was to invite you and your advisor, Dr. Blain, to view the images together with the graduate student raising the concerns, Ms. Elina Shetyn, myself, and Dr. Madiha Akhtar from the Office of Student Affairs. At that meeting, questions concerning figures, including the mislabeling of molecular weight scales and questions about duplication of data were raised, although the figures were described as draft documents. During that meeting, we agreed that an expert faculty review would be required as the next step. It was communicated in the meeting that the Graduate School, in consultation with the Office of Student Affairs, would select the appropriate faculty reviewers.

Dr. Blain, without consultation from the Graduate School or Office of Student Affairs, asked a colleague, Dr. Miriam Feuerman, to review with you the figures and the supporting data. Dr. Feuerman came to the conclusion that you had data to support any conclusions made in the figures, but acknowledged the mislabeling and poor record keeping.

Subsequent to Dr. Feuerman's review, the School of Graduate Studies asked two independent faculty members to 1) review the figures submitted to the Office of Student Affairs and 2) address the possibility that the figures in question or similar figures may have been submitted for publication or review.

In the original set of PowerPoint figures presented for review, they identified several features of concern, including:

1. There are handwritten notes to replace the disappointing portions of an experiment (Powerpoint slide 1, panel A) with more desirable results from one or more earlier experiments. The notes clearly imply that the desirable portions of the later experiment should be kept in place and presented alongside the older results. The end result would be a figure that purports to show a single experiment but in fact mixes together results from several experiments so as to justify desired conclusions.
2. There is evidence that you constructed figures using the wrong bands from immunoblots (i.e., bands of the wrong molecular weight) and the bands you took fit with your expected outcomes.

The faculty reviewers also identified related figures in a recent MCB paper on which you are the first author (Patel P, Asbach B, Shteyn E, et al. Brk/Protein Tyrosine Kinase 6 Phosphorylates p27KIP1, Regulating the Activity of Cyclin D—Cyclin-Dependent Kinase 4. *Molecular and Cellular Biology*. 2015;35(9):1506-1522. doi:10.1128/MCB.01206-14) and a recent grant application provided by Dr. Blain. Examples of concern from this document include:

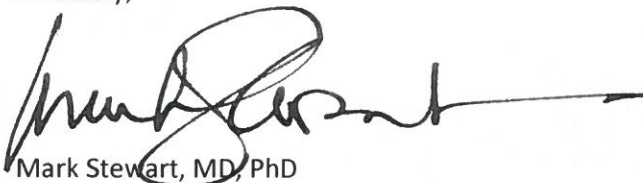
1. In the MCB paper, different immunoblot panels show the exact same patterns of bands, though the panels purportedly show different results and employed different primary antibodies. The similarity of the images is not accounted for in the methods or results.
2. The key antibodies developed by you, e.g. Y88, Y89, Y74, while used in the MCB paper, do not have the standard supporting control experiments to demonstrate specificity.
3. There was concern that a figure in the original PowerPoint slide 1, panel A illustrates a result that is the opposite of what is shown in the grant application.

The overall result of this review is that there are significant concerns with the draft figures that were reviewed as part of the original PowerPoint file submitted to the Office of Student Affairs. These concerns clearly indicate, at a minimum, a level of carelessness and poor record keeping that cannot continue. More significantly, the specific examples identified in the various figures raise concern that the final appearance of the figures is due to your own motivation to please or to follow instructions rather than to document actual results.

At this time, there will not be any disciplinary action stemming from this incident. You are encouraged to be much more careful with your record keeping and data handling going forward, and we will review your results at future works-in-progress or thesis meetings. If there any further concerns of mishandling data in the future, this incident will be brought back up and the consequences may be serious.

If you have any questions and/or concerns, I encourage you to schedule a meeting with me and Dr. Akhtar.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Stewart', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mark Stewart, MD, PhD
Dean, School of Graduate Studies

cc:

Stacy Blain (thesis advisor)
Office of Student Affairs
School of Graduate Studies