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In re: **Data Falsification Constituting Research Misconduct** in “Knockdown of astrocyte-elevated gene-1 inhibits prostate cancer progression through upregulation of FOXO3a activity” by N. Kikuno, H. Shiina, S. Urakami, K. Kawamoto, H. Hirata, Y. Tanaka, R.F. Place, D. Pookot, S. Majid, M. Igawa and R. Dahiya. **Oncogene** 26: 7647-7655), 2007.

Dear Professors Stebbing and Miller:

An Investigation Committee on Scientific Misconduct of the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, San Francisco and the University of California, San Francisco has determined that **Figures 4c, 4c, 5a and 5c** (EF1alpha bands) in the above cited paper (also attached) have falsification of data that constitutes Research Misconduct. The findings have been reviewed by the VA Office of Research Oversight (ORO) who concur with the conclusions.

The Committee determined that there was “*falsified data reported in Figure 4b Oncogene (2007) 26:7647-7655 by using the same band(s)*”:

- 1) “*To represent (1) lanes 2-6 of the Anti-p-FOXO3a and (2) lanes 1-5 in the Anti-p27KIP1*”;
- 2) “*To represent both CE from PC-3 cells in the Anti-FOXO3a panel and NE from DU145 cells in the Anti-phospho-FOXO3a panel in Figure 4C panel in Figure 4b*”
- 3) “*To represent (1) NF-κB binding in AEG-1 PMO treated PC-3 cells, (2) NF-κB binding in AEG-1 PMO treated DU145 cells, (3) AP-1 binding in AEG-1 PMO treated PC-3 cells and (4) AP-1 binding in AEG-1 PMO treated DU145 cells in Figures 5A and 5C.*”

The Committee “*concluded that falsification occurred because the same bands were used to represent different experimental conditions. The fact that non-overlapping strips of bands, representing different proteins wind up in different panels of the figures (a.iii) makes it unlikely to have occurred by honest error. Additionally, entire strips have not been copied, but*

sections of strips of bands have been cut out and pasted into different panels or parts of the same panel (a.v and a.vi)."

Furthermore, the Committee concluded that the *"nature of this manipulation makes it unlikely to have occurred by error because the bands are in separate strips of bands."*

The **Committee could not determine who was responsible for the falsification of data**. The laboratory could not provide any of the primary data. The senior author, Dr. Rajvir Dahiya, *"provided line scans of the analysis given to him by the first author of the published figures"* Dr. Nobuyuki Kikuno. The Committee reported that *"Dr. Dahiya has corresponded with first author, Dr. Kikuno, and claims he has forwarded the densitometry readings of the published blots, not the original data and is convinced that the bands are different."* However, the *"Investigation Committee does not accept the densitometry as valid but rather finds the forensic analyses (Exhibit 1, pp. 2, 3) more compelling."* Therefore, the Committee did not make a definitive determination of who was responsible for the falsification of data that constitutes Research Misconduct.

Based on these conclusions, we and the Committee recommend that Oncogene **assess this paper for retraction**: "With regard to Oncogene (2007) 26:7647-7655, 1) in the absence of the original data and the densitometry analysis which the committee finds inconclusive, we find retraction is more appropriate than a correction and 2) even though the journal has been notified after the last investigation and not taken action, they should be notified again because additional research misconduct has been found (also see allegation b below). As of the date of this report, this retraction has not occurred." Please note: **Attached is the letter we wrote in 2017 to Oncogene with earlier evidence that this same paper had data fabrication and/or falsification constituting research misconduct.**

If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact Dr. Grunfeld as above or by e-mail at carl.grunfeld@va.gov.

Sincerely,

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Robert Nissenson, PhD
Research Integrity Officer