

The process by BMC Public Health has been problematic from the beginning. There was no information provided to the authors about any kind of investigation into our paper prior to being informed about the planned retraction. We, the authors, were piece-wise informed about the reasons, only after repeatedly asking for them: We learned by email that the details of the investigation remained confidential.

The critique suggests that using an 'ever' prevalence of poisoning to denote annual frequency may result in an overestimation. We agreed on this and discussed this at length as a possible source for bias in our publication. However, the question is if such an overestimation has taken place. We detailed in our rebuttal that the prevalences used in our extrapolations are not higher than "true" annual ones and therefore no overestimation has taken place. For countries without a strict annual prevalence the effect on the extrapolations is negligible.

BMC Public Health should have taken the concerns raised and asked that the reader send a letter to the editor, which would have generated an interesting dialogue on the science around estimations of pesticide poisoning. We made use of the best available data in our study. And it's important to remember that the paper is about generating an estimate of the millions of people who are getting poisoned by pesticides every year. For example, a dialogue in the journal could have encouraged further discussion of how to improve on data collection on pesticide poisonings, by governments and other institutions, in order to work towards preventing harm.

The retraction of our paper is an unacceptable result from an unacceptable process. We have shown that even if the critique was right, it would affect the results of our study negligibly. The decision to retract therefore is in contrast to the own policies of the journal saying that retractions are not appropriate if there is inconclusive evidence to support retraction.