

September 19, 2023

Brandon Stell, PhD  
Chief Executive Officer  
The PubPeer Foundation  
2443 Fillmore Street #380-4492  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
By email: [contact@pubpeer.org](mailto:contact@pubpeer.org)

Re: Request to Enforce PubPeer's Terms of Service Prohibiting Stalking and Harassment

Dear Dr. Stell:

I am writing to respectfully ask you and PubPeer to prohibit the inappropriate use of the PubPeer website as a vehicle for ongoing cyberstalking and harassment against me and my colleagues. I view this issue as both a violation of the [PubPeer Terms of Service](#) and detrimental to PubPeer's focus as a positive forum for productive engagement around research quality and research integrity.

I am Physician-in-Chief Emeritus and the former chair of the department of medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, as well as the Hersey Distinguished Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. I have engaged in widely recognized research in vascular biology and disease for over 40 years, and have published widely in high-quality journals (more than 130,000 citations, h-index 168). Throughout the past many months, an individual (or group of individuals) (together for purposes of this letter, the "cyberstalker") has relentlessly targeted myself and my colleagues by targeting us in an aggressive cyberstalking and harassment campaign. We have reason to believe these events are related to a matter involving a South Korean medical student who briefly worked in my laboratory at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH). In South Korea, this student was the subject of false allegations of research misconduct by other South Korean scientists. The allegations were formally dismissed by his university after an internal investigation, and the scientists who brought forward the allegations were discredited. Shortly thereafter, which is why we believe the conduct is related and retaliatory, the cyberstalker began harassing the student, as well as me and other colleagues who have worked with me and/or the student. Specifically, as it relates to my experience with the cyberstalker, they have:

- 1) falsely assumed my identity and the identities of two members of my group, and using those false identifies, contacted journals on false pretenses to request withdrawal of three papers;
- 2) falsely claimed that two computational biologists in my group used the cyberstalker's code in two of the papers, but was unable to provide any documentation of the code;
- 3) harassed myself and my colleagues by contacting us, our institutions, and journals with false allegations using multiple aliases and email addresses using Protonmail that cannot be tracked and to which no one can respond; and,



4) most relevant to this letter, misused PubPeer and breached its Terms of Service by posting comments on PubPeer that are trivial, uninformed, and based on incomplete information, and then sending emails to institutions with which my colleagues and I are affiliated citing those same PubPeer comments to claim that we engaged in unethical, dishonest, and/or fraudulent behavior.

A list of specific comments on the PubPeer website that illustrate the problematic behavior detailed in #4 above, along with my explanation of why the comments are inappropriate and/or false, is included herein as **Attachment A**. In addition, included in **Attachment B** are multiple examples of the many emails that my institutions and I have received from the cyberstalker, for evidence of their fraudulent, concerning, and threatening communications and flagrant misuse of PubPeer.

The relevant portion of the PubPeer website Terms of Service reads: “*You agree not to, and will not assist, encourage, or enable others to use the Website to: Violate our Content Guidelines, for example, by writing a fake or defamatory review, trading reviews with other users, or compensating someone or being compensated to write or remove a review; Threaten, stalk, harm, or harass others, or promote bigotry or discrimination...*”. As detailed in this letter and the examples included in the **Attachments A and B**, the cyberstalker is actively violating these Terms of Service by posting unnecessary, misleading, and often inaccurate comments on PubPeer, and then using those posts towards their online email campaign of defamation, harassment, and cyberstalking against me and my colleagues. Such bad faith conduct not only violates the clearly stated Terms of Service, but also damages the reputation of PubPeer as a platform for productive discourse amongst well-intentioned scientists.

Based on the foregoing, I respectfully request that you and PubPeer enforce the Terms of Service by removing the comments pertaining to my work that were posted in bad faith and are currently being used by the cyberstalker solely for defamatory and harassment purposes. In addition, as it is expected that the cyberstalker’s egregious activity will be seriously hindered by a lack of additional comments to use in bad faith, I further respectfully request PubPeer institute a moratorium on anonymous comments regarding my work for a period of six (6) months.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests. Please know that I value PubPeer and the service it provides to the research community, and hope you agree that the goals of the platform are best met when it is used in good faith, for its intended purpose, and within the boundaries of its Terms of Service.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph Loscalzo, MD, PhD

cc: Emily Sobiecki, JD  
Tracy Sykes, JD



## ATTACHMENT A

## Illustrative List of the Cyberstalker's Harassment via Comments Posted on PubPeer

1. **All comments posted by Xerophyta elgandulosa on the paper:** "MYC overrides HIF-1 $\alpha$  to regulate proliferating primary cell metabolism in hypoxia." Copeland CA, Olenchock BA, Ziehr D, McGarrity S, Leahy K, Young JD, Loscalzo J, Oldham WM. *Elife*. 2023 Jul 10;12:e82597. doi: 10.7554/eLife.82597. PMID: 37428010. **Note: I have no relevant competing interests for this study.**
2. **All comments posted by Marsupidium latifolium on the paper:** "Drugst.One -- A plug-and-play solution for online systems medicine and network-based drug repurposing." Maier A, Hartung M, Abovsky M, Adamowicz K, Bader GD, Baier S, Blumenthal DB, Chen J, Elkjaer ML, Garcia-Hernandez C, Helmy M, Hoffmann M, Jurisica I, Kotlyar M, Lazareva O, Levi H, List M, Lobentanzer S, Loscalzo J, Malod-Dognin N, Manz Q, Matschinske J, Mee M, Oubounyt M, Pico AR, Pillich RT, Poschenrieder JM, Pratt D, Pržulj N, Sadegh S, Saez-Rodriguez J, Sarkar S, Shaked G, Shamir R, Trummer N, Turhan U, Wang R, Zolotareva O, Baumbach J. *ArXiv*. 2023 Jul 4:arXiv:2305.15453v2. Preprint. PMID: 37332567. **Note: I have no relevant conflict of interest for this preprint study.**
3. **All comments posted by Perimathis minuta on the paper:** "NEDD9 Is a Novel and Modifiable Mediator of Platelet-Endothelial Adhesion in the Pulmonary Circulation." Alba GA, Samokhin AO, Wang RS, Zhang YY, Wertheim BM, Arons E, Greenfield EA, Lundberg Slingsby MH, Ceglowski JR, Haley KJ, Bowman FP, Yu YR, Haney JC, Eng G, Mitchell RN, Sheets A, Vargas SO, Seo S, Channick RN, Leary PJ, Rajagopal S, Loscalzo J, Battinelli EM, Maron BA. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med*. 2021 Jun 15;203(12):1533-1545. doi: 10.1164/rccm.202003-0719OC. PMID: 33523764. **Note: this is a trivial comment regarding pressure tracing with appropriate response.**
4. **All comments posted by Tritomaria scitula on the paper:** "Network analysis of the genomic basis of the placebo effect." Wang RS, Hall KT, Giulianini F, Passow D, Kaptchuk TJ, Loscalzo J. *JCI Insight*. 2017 Jun 2;2(11):e93911. doi: 10.1172/jci.insight.93911. eCollection 2017 Jun 2. PMID: 28570268. **Note: this is an uninformed remark as networks that contain orphan nodes are often described graphically in this way.**
5. **All comments posted by Kniphophia latifolia on the paper:** "L-2-Hydroxyglutarate Protects Against Cardiac Injury via Metabolic Remodeling." He H, Mulhern RM, Oldham WM, Xiao W, Lin YD, Liao R, Loscalzo J. *Circ Res*. 2022 Sep 16;131(7):562-579. doi: 10.1161/CIRCRESAHA.122.321227. Epub 2022 Aug 31. PMID: 36043417. **Note: the comments pertain to differences between earlier abstract presentation at a national meeting and the larger data set comprising full publication, but such differences often develop as a full study unfolds.**
6. **All comments posted by Symmoca albicanella on the paper:** "Migraine Intervention With STARFlex Technology (MIST) trial: a prospective, multicenter, double-blind, sham-controlled trial to evaluate the effectiveness of patent foramen ovale closure with STARFlex



septal repair implant to resolve refractory migraine headache.” Dowson A, Mullen MJ, Peatfield R, Muir K, Khan AA, Wells C, Lipscombe SL, Rees T, De Giovanni JV, Morrison WL, Hildick-Smith D, Elrington G, Hillis WS, Malik IS, Rickards A. *Circulation*. 2008 Mar 18;117(11):1397-404. doi: 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.107.727271. Epub 2008 Mar 3. PMID: 18316488. **Note: the comment critiques my role as editor responsible for accepting the paper—what relevance is this comment here as it has nothing to do with my own research and reflects a difference of editorial opinion?**

7. **All comments posted by *Metacharis cuparina* on the paper:** “Repurposing Drugs for the Treatment of COVID-19 and Its Cardiovascular Manifestations.” Wang RS, Loscalzo J. *Circ Res*. 2023 May 12;132(10):1374-1386. doi: 10.1161/CIRCRESAHA.122.321879. Epub 2023 May 11. PMID: 37167362. **Note: trivial comment regarding unnamed node; criticized for citing (unknowingly) a retracted paper, which has since been corrected by removal of the citation and the corresponding text.**
8. **Comment #2 posted by *Lirula exigua* on the paper:** “Individualized interactomes for network-based precision medicine in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy with implications for other clinical pathophenotypes.” Maron BA, Wang RS, Shevtsov S, Drakos SG, Arons E, Wever-Pinzon O, Huggins GS, Samokhin AO, Oldham WM, Aguib Y, Yacoub MH, Rowin EJ, Maron BJ, Maron MS, Loscalzo J. *Nat Commun*. 2021 Feb 8;12(1):873. doi: 10.1038/s41467-021-21146-y. PMID: 33558530. **Note: these are trivial comments about duplicated labels and outliers.**
9. **All comments posted by *Euplotes aediculatus* on the paper:** “A dynamic single cell-based framework for digital twins to prioritize disease genes and drug targets.” Li X, Lee EJ, Lilja S, Loscalzo J, Schäfer S, Smelik M, Strobl MR, Sysoev O, Wang H, Zhang H, Zhao Y, Gawel DR, Bohle B, Benson M. *Genome Med*. 2022 May 6;14(1):48. doi: 10.1186/s13073-022-01048-4. PMID: 35513850. **Note: I contributed to writing and reformulating the focus of the paper, as indicated by ‘all authors’ comment.**
10. **All comments posted by *Eurystomus orientalis* on the paper:** “Repurposing Drugs for the Treatment of COVID-19 and Its Cardiovascular Manifestations.” Wang RS, Loscalzo J. *Circ Res*. 2023 May 12;132(10):1374-1386. doi: 10.1161/CIRCRESAHA.122.321879. Epub 2023 May 11. PMID: 37167362. **Note - the ‘strange protein names’ issue was addressed.**
11. **All comments posted by *Bolitoglossa yucatanica* and *Allium haemanthoides* on the paper:** “Network determinants of cardiovascular calcification and repositioned drug treatments.” Song E, Wang RS, Leopold JA, Loscalzo J. *FASEB J*. 2020 Aug;34(8):11087-11100. doi: 10.1096/fj.202001062R. Epub 2020 Jul 8. PMID: 32638415. **Note: the comments claim we cited a retracted paper, but the paper we cited was not retracted until after the publication of our paper!**
12. **All comments posted by *Orlaya kochii* on the paper:** “Local generation and efficient evaluation of numerous drug combinations in a single sample.” Elgart V, Loscalzo J. *Elife*. 2023 Apr 11;12:e85439. doi: 10.7554/eLife.85439. PMID: 37039628. **Note: the complaint**

that this paper is purely computation suggesting that we intentionally misled the reader is absurd.

13. **All comments posted by Camilla granthaniama on the paper:** “Hesperidin, a flavonoid glycoside with sedative effect, decreases brain pERK1/2 levels in mice.” Martínez MC, Fernandez SP, Loscalzo LM, Wasowski C, Paladini AC, Marder M, Medina JH, Viola H. *Pharmacol Biochem Behav.* 2009 Apr;92(2):291-6. doi: 10.1016/j.pbb.2008.12.016. Epub 2008 Dec 31. PMID: 19159642. **Note: I am *not* a coauthor of this study—Leonard M. Loscalzo is a different author.**
14. **All comments by the Homolobus palidostigmus on the paper:** “Molecular interaction networks and drug development: Novel approach to drug target identification and drug repositioning.” Loscalzo J. *FASEB J.* 2023 Jan;37(1):e22660. doi: 10.1096/fj.202201683R. PMID: 36468661. **Note: complained of inadequate citations of other groups’ work, which is a matter of opinion and not directly relevant to this Perspectives piece (it was not meant to be a comprehensive review of the literature, and not invited to be so by the editor).**
15. **All comments posted by Nothoceros giganteos on the paper:** “Identification of potent inhibitors of SARS-CoV-2 infection by combined pharmacological evaluation and cellular network prioritization. Patten JJ, Keiser PT, Morselli-Gysi D, Menichetti G, Mori H, Donahue CJ, Gan X, Valle ID, Geoghegan-Barek K, Anantpadma M, Boytz R, Berrigan JL, Stubbs SH, Ayazika T, O’Leary C, Jalloh S, Wagner F, Ayehunie S, Elledge SJ, Anderson D, Loscalzo J, Zitnik M, Gummuluru S, Namchuk MN, Barabási AL, Davey RA. *iScience.* 2022 Sep 16;25(9):104925. doi: 10.1016/j.isci.2022.104925. Epub 2022 Aug 13. PMID: 35992305. **Note: I have no relevant competing interests here.**



## ATTACHMENT B

### Examples of Cyberstalker's Harassment via Fraudulent, Concerning and Threatening Emails

Below please find just three examples of many malicious emails sent with PubPeer 'support', each of which attacked my reputation and required my time and attention to correct the record.

1. **Sent to many members of the faculty at Brigham and Women's Hospital on August 22, 2023 (one of many aliases used via protonmail: [michaelmkim261@protonmail.com](mailto:michaelmkim261@protonmail.com)):**

*Many people know Loscalzo Lab has a lot of academic and other ethical misconduct issues.*

*<https://pubpeer.com/search?q=Loscalzo>*

*If you cooperate [with] my requests, I can stop all of this situation;*

1. *Expel the following Aoisian researchers from academia: Rui-Sheng Wang, Feixiong Cheng, Laurel Y. Lee, Euijun Song, and Amitabh Sharma.*
2. *Support all Korean and Chinese physician-scientists working at the MGH and Broad Institute.*
3. *Support young Korean and Chinese physician-scientists whose parents are professors or physicians.*
4. *Withdraw your problematic papers.*
5. *Close the Channing Division of Network Medicine at BWH.*
6. *Expel disabled researchers (Amitabh Sharma and Euijun Song) from academia and close the BWH diversity department.*
7. *Step down from your chair position.*

*I look forward to cooperating with you.*

*Thanks,  
Michael*

2. **Sent to the editors of the textbook, Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine (of which I am also an editor), on August 14, 2023 (yet another alias used via protonmail: [amittaol@proton.me](mailto:amittaol@proton.me)):**

*Dear Harrison Editorial Members:*

*Your outstanding textbook....is a fraud book. This international-recognized medical textbook contains fraudulent content. Joseph Loscalzo is a prolific toxic crook....*

*Please see the following PubPeer website: <https://pubpeer.com/search?q=Joseph+Loscalzo>....*

*Sincerely,  
Amit Tao*

3. **Sent to the editor of Circulation Research on June 11, 2023, after fraudulently creating a protonmail account for one of my coauthors and colleague, Ruisheng Wang (i.e., identity theft to perpetrate the following malicious transaction):**

*Dear Circulation Research Journal:*

*I am writing to request to withdraw my article published in Circulation Research.*

*Wang RS, & Loscalzo J. (2023)....Circulation Research 132:1374-1386.*

*PubPeer comments brought to our attention to possible research integrity issue on our article*  
<https://pubpeer.com/publications/4BF224545A26BFBF422AF2FE7F567>

*I fully agree with those errors and I discovered that the computational analysis is not reproducible. Also, the “network medicine” is not a statistically reproducible technology yet. Of note, our lab has research misconduct history before.*

*I apologize for our withdrawal request. Please withdraw our article as soon as possible.*

*Sincerely Yours,  
Rui-Sheng Wang, PhD*