

Dear Editor, dear members of the editorial board, dear members of ISAC,

Four years after its publication, the article of Gautret et al. [1] is still available online. Despite the important methodological concerns [2], despite the evidence that this article contains flawed data [3] as mentioned on page 98 of this inspection report from French supervision[4], despite the negative influence this article has had worldwide on health policies during the pandemic [5], despite the fact that the results of this article have been disproven [6], despite the fact that the metadata of the reviewing time of a single day of this article has now been hidden [7], despite the action undertaken by other journals which asked for retraction of this article [7], despite the deadly consequences that this article may still have [8], this article has not been retracted.

Medical science knows about the case of another fraudulent article which was retracted only several years after publication [9], with the awful consequences this delay generated [10, 11]. Scientific publishing should have learned from its mistakes and try to avoid repeating them. We are deeply disappointed to see this is not yet the case here.

ISAC informed us that some of these concerns were shared by its analysis in April 2020 [12], but nothing happened during the last four years, which seems unusually long to us.

Furthermore, we recently learned that three of the authors of this article have been requesting the removal of their names from the list of authors a while ago. The current editorial committee should facilitate this decision, which follows on from Frits Rosendaal's comments.

Even if you are not inclined to retract this paper on scientific and ethical grounds, we hope you might consider doing so to mitigate the considerable reputational damage to the journal that is caused by publication of such seriously flawed material.

Thus, we wonder why no action has been taken in this case and we would appreciate it if you could inform us about the actions you intend to take to bring a definitive ending to this case.

Dominique Costagliola, PhD, Senior Emeritus Researcher, Institut Pierre Louis d'épidémiologie et de Santé Publique, Sorbonne Université, INSERM, Paris, France.

Elisabeth Bik, PhD, science consultant, Harbers Bik LLC, San Francisco, CA, USA.

Karine Lacombe, Sorbonne Université, Inserm UMR-S1136, IPLESP

Véronique Saada, Biopathology department, Gustave Roussy Anticancer Center, Villejuif, France.

Dorothy V. M. Bishop, FRS, FMedSci., Emeritus Professor, University of Oxford, UK.

David H. Gorski, MD, PhD, FACS Professor of Surgery and Oncology, Wayne State University School of Medicine

Hervé Maisonneuve, Research Integrity Officer, School of Medicine, Université Paris-Cité, France.

Mathieu Molimard, Pharmacology Department, CHU de Bordeaux - Université de Bordeaux, France.

Éric Billy, immuno-oncology scientist

Jérôme Barrière, Medical Oncology Department, Polyclinique Saint-Jean, Cagnes-sur-Mer, France.

Jacques Robert, Université de Bordeaux, INSERM Unité 1312, 229 cours de l'Argonne, 33076 Bordeaux, France.

Alexander Samuel, PhD.

Lonni Besançon, PhD, Assistant Professor, Linköping University.

Fabrice Frank, PhD.

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[1] Gautret, P., Lagier, J. C., Parola, P., Meddeb, L., Mailhe, M., Doudier, B., ... & Raoult, D. (2020). Hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin as a treatment of COVID-19: results of an open-label non-randomized clinical trial. *International journal of antimicrobial agents*, 56(1), 105949. <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.ijantimicag.2020.105949>

[2] Rosendaal, F. R. (2020). Review of: "Hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin as a treatment of COVID-19: results of an open-label non-randomized clinical trial Gautret et al 2010. *International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents*, 56(1), 106063. <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.ijantimicag.2020.106063>

[3] <https://www.sciencepresse.qc.ca/actualite/2021/11/22/hydroxychloroquine-falsifications-menaces>

[4] <https://igas.gouv.fr/Controle-de-l-IHU-Mediterranee-infection.html>

[5] Saag, M. S. (2020). Misguided use of hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19: the infusion of politics into science. *Jama*, 324(21), 2161-2162. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.22389>

[6] Axfors, C., Schmitt, A. M., Janiaud, P., Van't Hooft, J., Abd-Elsalam, S., Abdo, E. F., ... & Hemkens, L. G. (2021). Mortality outcomes with hydroxychloroquine and chloroquine in COVID-19 from an international collaborative meta-analysis of randomized trials. *Nature communications*, 12(1), 2349. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-22446-z>

- [7] <https://doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.therap.2023.06.001>
- [8] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopha.2023.116055>
- [9] <https://doi.org/10.4103%2F0019-5545.82529>
- [10] <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256395>
- [11] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypped.2019.02.011>
- [12] <https://www.isac.world/news-and-publications/gautret-et-al-investigation>