

Mail to Ellie Kincaid

<ellie@retractionwatch.com>

Dear Ellie,

here is a more elaborate comment on the current proceedings with the Frass-Study on homeopathy with lung cancer patients.

Just bear in mind: Our major allegation, corroborated by the findings of the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity, is that the results were obtained by fraud, namely post hoc data manipulation and falsification. Issues are:

- Backdating of study protocols by a couple of years, not only once but twice. This way definitions and procedures look like they were established before patients' data became available - which is not the case.
- Post hoc definition of a huge number of exclusion criteria
- Results bear characteristics as they arise if you drop unfavorable data, namely patients that died early under homeopathy and patients with a long survival time under placebo
- Reduction of the follow up time in the main outcome criterion from two years (104 weeks) down to 18 weeks only

Neither of this is addressed, leave alone explained or clarified by the newly published second correction by the study authors. They explain some trifles about the study registration, its title, and what software was used to manage the patients. Or items that were never discussed like some details of the applied statistics. But the elephant in the room is not mentioned. What we do not understand however is why this correction was published just now, four years after the study was published - on the very same day as this comment by Figg and Bates - while our letter to the editor from 2021 remains unpublished.

The comment by WD Figg and SA Bates does not address any of the issues either. The authors raise the question if homeopathic preparations after all may be able to induce some specific effect – and thus allowing homeopathy to become scientifically “justifiable”, based on alternative facts. But this question is completely irrelevant: If some results are obtained by data manipulation and falsification, then it is pointless to argue if there might have been some effect by the preparations that were administered: the data are not valid and it is wrong, unethical and might cause harm for patients if they stay published like solid outcomes of some rigorous trial.

An alternative explanation would be that this comment is published to induce a quest for something non-existent - 'to determine whether any fraction of a homeopathic remedy holds a thread of promise' - to further refrain from what is overdue for the longest period of time: the retraction of this fraudulent paper.

By the way, the lead author of this comment seems to have some background in pharmacology. He should be able to answer this question by himself: What might be present in a homeopathic preparation that is not present in the raw material, induced by shaking and diluting? And a look into the Austrian law on drugs (§ 11[1].4 of the Austrian 'Arzneimittelgesetz'

<https://www.apothekerkammer.at/infothek/rechtliche-hintergruende/medizinrecht/medizinrecht-arzneimittelgesetz-amg#c1206>) should inform him, that a homeopathic drug as a medicinal product must not hold more of the mother ingredient than 1 in 10,000 units or not more than one hundredth of the amount that would render a drug to be sold on prescription only.

In case of any more questions please do not hesitate to contact me or Viktor.

Norbert Aust