

from: David A Sanders
to: Avery Orrall <avery@retractionwatch.com>
date: Jul 18, 2025, 2:25 PM
subject: Re: Retraction Watch Media Request

I have examined the article, the original correction, the “addendum,” and the Pubpeer comments.

If I may, I will give you a full analysis.

First, in the original article Figures 1f and 4g are very similar, even though they purport to represent different experiments. Hence, the necessity for the 2003 “correction”—substitution of new images for Figures 1f and 4g. Peculiarly, the originals figures are rectangular, whereas the substitutes are square. Of more potential concern is that in the original article Figure 1d appears to be at higher magnification than Figure 1e, and Figure 4f appears to be at higher magnification than Figure 4e—in both cases a contradiction to the figure legends. I cannot, of course, be certain without access to the original data, but the conclusion appears to be likely to be correct.

With regard to the “addendum,” it is inadequate in multiple senses. First, it is stated that “errors that may have occurred during the assembly of PCR measurements for β -actin expression in Langerhans cells and monocytes, as well as CCL2/7 expression in UV-irradiated skin.”

1. The problematic data involve not only β -actin and CCL2/7 expression but also CCL27 expression.
2. The problematic data are not limited to “UV-irradiated skin,” but also other experimental conditions.
3. It is not acceptable to omit mentioning the identities of the figures containing the problematic data (Figures 5a and 6a).
4. “the authors acknowledge and apologize for possible inadvertent errors that may have occurred...” Possible? Inadvertent? MAY have occurred?
5. The argument that an image concerning protein expression (Figure 6b) somehow justifies thoroughly flawed images of RNA levels is absurd.

The Pubpeer comments are mainly correct, but they appear to have missed another likely image issue. The data in Figure 6a CCL2/UV-30 min appear to have the same origin (after manipulation) as those in CCL27/Normal skin.

The extent and nature of the problems with the figures would, in my opinion, dictate that the article should have been retracted.

Cheers,

David Sanders

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On Thu, Jul 24, 2025 at 10:52 AM Merad, Miriam wrote:

Dear avery

Thank you for reaching out,. Misassembled means that the wrong bands were reported - The PCR that was misassembled was measuring housekeeping genes, which are expressed by all cells, as well as myeloid chemokines, which are commonly produced by inflamed cells. These chemokines were also shown to be expressed using an orthogonal method (IHC) in the paper - The error was an unfortunate mistake in assembling the PCR- these was no reason to falsify or misrepresent these results which were verified by another method and not the focus of the paper

All the best

Miriam Merad

On Thu, Jul 24, 2025 at 11:18 AM Merad, Miriam wrote:

There was two conditions :

1/ UV irradiated skin

2/ Normal skin

Normal skin express Ccl27 (homeostatic chemokine)

UV irradiated skin expresses ccl2/7

I believe that showing the expression of ccl2/7 protein using IHC is more relevant than showing RNA expression by PCR as the protein is the physiological unit -

The misassembling is very unfortunate but there was no misconduct here - as there was no reason to add an orthogonal method to the IHC which was already providing clear evidence of chemokine production