

Medical journal Lancet retracts papers on artificial windpipe graft

July 6 2018

The *Lancet* medical journal Friday [withdrew two papers](#) authored by disgraced Italian surgeon Paolo Macchiarini, found guilty of misconduct regarding an experimental windpipe graft procedure of which most recipients died.

Retracting a study is a rare step for a prestigious journal which publishes work only after it has been peer-reviewed by other experts in the field concerned.

In an editorial, The Lancet announced "we are retracting two papers by Paolo Macchiarini and co-authors after receiving requests to do so from the new President of the Karolinska Institute (KI), Ole Petter Ottersen."

Macchiarini was attached to the Karolinska Institute, which awards the Nobel medicine prize every year, when he tested his controversial artificial tracheotomy transplants and published the results in *The Lancet* in 2011.

The operation involves coating an artificial wind pipe "scaffold" with the recipient's own stem cells, meant to develop into mature tracheal cells that will not be rejected by the patient's immune system.

Macchiarini and his colleagues performed eight such transplants in total. Seven of the patients died, and doctors lost track of the eighth.

The [procedure](#) was hailed at first as a breakthrough in [regenerative](#)

[medicine.](#)

But allegations soon emerged that the risky procedure had been carried out on at least one individual who had not, at the time, been critically ill.

In 2014, several surgeons at Karolinska filed a complaint alleging that Macchiarini had downplayed the risks of the procedure.

Karolinska suspended all transplants and fired Macchiarini.

In his request to *The Lancet*, Ottersen stated that "no ethical permit had been obtained for the underlying research," the journal quoted.

He added that "the research was carried out without sufficient support by preclinical data, and the paper presents its data in a way that is unduly positive and uncritical. The clinical findings reported are not supported by source data."

Two members of the Nobel medicine prize assembly were forced to step down over the scandal.

The *Lancet* in 2010, famously retracted a 1998 study that linking autism with a triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR).

Many parents stopped vaccinating their children as a result of the claims, and the issue is still a hot debate in many countries.

More information: *The Lancet* Editors. Retraction—Tracheobronchial transplantation with a stem-cell-seeded bioartificial nanocomposite: a proof-of-concept study, *The Lancet* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31558-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31558-7)

The Lancet Editors. Retraction—Engineered whole organs and complex

tissues, *The Lancet* (2018). [DOI: 10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31560-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31560-5)

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