Medical Xpress

US stem cell researcher accused of faking results

October 17 2018

A cardiovascular specialist known for his stem cell research has seen his

once high-flying career falter as several top-flight US institutions have accused him of falsifying data in his studies.

So far, more than 30 articles by Piero Anversa are now believed to be fraudulent, including one retracted on Wednesday by the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

In a remarkable statement, Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston this week said Anversa, the former lab director at the institutions, had included "falsified and/or fabricated data" in those articles.

Harvard and the hospital advised the relevant journals to retract the articles at issue.

In the world of scientific research, a retraction is the worst disavowal of the author's work. It means the article or study has serious problems or errors, intentional or not.

The article pulled by the *NEJM* made headlines in 2011. Numerous media outlets including AFP covered its publication at the time.

Anversa had announced the discovery of the first human lung stem cells that are self-renewing, saying they could offer important clues for treating chronic lung diseases.

Anversa then announced several other "discoveries" about cardiac stem cells, earning praise and amassing credibility in the field—which allowed him to get tens of millions of dollars in federal grant money.

But for the past several years, doubts accumulated about the veracity of his work.

Other researchers were unable to reproduce his lab results in the same conditions. Scholarly articles were corrected, and the first retraction came in 2014, by *Circulation*, a journal published by the American Heart Association.

Now, dozens more could be added to that blacklist.

"A bedrock principle of science is that all publications are supported by rigorous research practices," Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital said in their joint statement.

"When these practices deviate from community standards, there are far-reaching consequences for the scientific enterprise," they added.

"The scientific community is interdependent and reliant on the rigor and good faith of researchers as we work collaboratively to advance knowledge and transform human health."

Citation: US stem cell researcher accused of faking results (2018, October 17) retrieved 10 May 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-10-harvard-heart-papers-fraudulent.html