March 7, 2012

To our readers:

Toho University today announced the retraction of eight manuscripts by Dr. Yoshitaka Fujii published under its auspices, as well as the dismissal of Dr. Fujii from Toho University. The manuscripts have been retracted for lack of proper ethics approval. Specific manuscripts that have been retracted are:


The announcement also identified a single manuscript for which there was evidence of appropriate IRB approval:

Fujii Y, Itakura M. Efficacy of the lidocaine/flurbiprofen axetil combination for reducing pain during the injection of propofol. Minerva Anestesiol. 2011;77:693-7

The announcement by Toho University did not address 13 additional manuscripts by Dr. Fujii that list Toho University as the academic institution of record:


11. Fujii Y, Nakayama M. Prevention of pain due to injection of propofol with IV administration of lidocaine 40 mg + metoclopramide 2.5, 5, or 10 mg or saline: a
These manuscripts were retracted because of lack of IRB approval. The announcement by Toho University did not address the possibility of fraud. However, the April 2000 issue of *Anesthesia & Analgesia* includes a disturbing Letter to the Editor by Kranke, Apfel, and Roewer alleging research fraud by Dr. Fujii1. The title of the letter says everything you need to know: “Reported data on granisetron and postoperative nausea and vomiting by Fujii et al. are incredibly nice!” In 2001 Kranke and colleagues published a manuscript demonstrating consistent discrepancies between data published by Fujii supporting the efficacy of granisetron and data published by other investigators.2

The announcement by Toho University follows a joint effort over the past two years by multiple Editors-in-Chief to follow up on the Letter to the Editor in *Anesthesia & Analgesia* and lingering concerns about the integrity of Dr. Fujii’s published research. There will be further disclosure over the next few days by the involved editors. I want to explicitly thank Dr. Steve Yentis, Editor-in-Chief of *Anaesthesia*, who raised the question two years ago about the integrity of Dr. Fujii’s published studies and our responsibility to pursue allegations of misconduct more than 10 years old. I also want to thank Dr. Donald Miller, Editor-in-Chief of the *Canadian Journal of Anesthesia*, who is responsible for the inquiry conducted by Toho University that led to the public acknowledgment that Dr. Fujii’s work was compromised and his dismissal from Toho University.

These findings raise considerable concern about the integrity of the papers published by Dr. Fujii in *Anesthesia & Analgesia*. The following manuscripts in *Anesthesia & Analgesia* may represent fraudulent research:

1. Fujii Y, Uemura A. The effects of different dobutamine infusion rates on hypercapnic depression of diaphragmatic contractility in pentobarbital-anesthetized dogs. Anesth Analg. 2007;105:1379-84 (University of Tsukuba)


These manuscripts are from two institutions: the University of Tsukuba (21 papers) and Toride Kyodo General Hospital (3 papers). I will contact each institution requesting an inquiry into the integrity of these manuscripts. Although these manuscripts date back to 1994, we must make a determination what papers are valid, and what papers represent research fraud.

Following publication of the Letter to the Editor from Kranke and colleagues in April 2000, along with a non-specific response from Dr. Fujii, there was no follow-up on the allegation of data manipulation. There was no request for an institutional review of Dr. Fujii’s research. Additionally, Anesthesiology & Analgesia published 11 additional manuscripts by Dr. Fujii following the 2000 allegations of research fraud.
The Journal’s response to the allegations of research fraud in the 2000 Letter to the Editor by Kranke and colleagues was inadequate. The subsequent submissions to the Journal by Dr. Fujii should not have been published without first vetting the allegations of fraud. I apologize to our readers, and the patients we serve, for the manner in which the allegations of fraud were handled by *Anesthesia & Analgesia*.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Shafer, MD
Editor-in-Chief
*Anesthesia & Analgesia*

References:
