



THE RECTOR'S DECISION ON A MATTER CONCERNING THE ALLEGED VIOLATION OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Complainant:

Alexander Magazinov ([REDACTED])

Respondent:

Hanieh Shirvani ([REDACTED])
[REDACTED]

Time or period of the alleged research integrity violation:

Year 2022

Allegation of the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR):

The alleged research integrity announcement came to University of Oulu and University of Jyväskylä on January 8, 2024, simultaneously and with the same content (*Attachment 1*).

The RCR process guidelines:

The University of Oulu is committed to adhering to the guidelines on (a) responsible conduct of research ([RCR 2012 Guidelines](#)) and (b) [RI 2023 Guidelines](#) both published by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK). University of Oulu committed to the new RI Guidelines on April 6, 2023. The principles of good governance and regulations on disqualification in the Administrative Procedure Act apply in the RI process.

The alleged violations took place before the University of Oulu's commitment to the latest guidelines, but the notification of the alleged violation was submitted after the commitment to the latest guidelines.

Based on the TENK's instructions

- The alleged RI violation is assessed by the University of Oulu using the RCR 2012 guidelines enforced when the alleged violation took place
- The RI process is conducted by the University of Oulu following the RI 2023 Guidelines.

According to RCR 2012 Guidelines the allegation must be submitted to the organization in which the alleged misconduct has occurred or is presumed

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to occur. See: Guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK) 2012, p. 36.

https://tenk.fi/sites/tenk.fi/files/HTK_ohje_2012.pdf

According the RI 2023 Guidelines the complainant sends the notification of an alleged RI violation to the director of the organization where the alleged violation has taken place. See: Guideline of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK 2023, p. 23.

https://tenk.fi/sites/default/files/2023-05/RI_Guidelines_2023.pdf

The contents of the RCR 2012 notification:

The complainant describes notification of alleged violations of RI for two publications:

- Scientific publication Paper A: Elsevier's International Journal of Biological Macromolecules: Non-coding RNA in SARS-CoV-2: Progress toward therapeutic significance - **Hanieh Shirvani**, Hanieh Jafari, Sayyed Sajjad Moravveji, Fatemeh Abbasi Faranghizadeh, Mehrdad Talebi, Jalaledin Ghanavi, Farbod Esfandi, Sajad Najafi, Masomeh Nasiri Moghadam, Poopak Farnia, Seyed Mohsen Aghaei Zarch. Received 26 **August 2022**, Revised 10 **October 2022**, Accepted 21 **October 2022**, Available online 26 **October 2022**, Version of Record 1 **November 2022**.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0141813022020360>
- Scientific publication Paper B: Elsevier's Cellular Signalling: MiR-211 plays a dual role in cancer development: From tumor suppressor to tumor enhancer - **Hanieh Shirvani**, Jalaledin Ghanavi, Amin Aliabadi, Fatemehsadat Mousavinasab, Mehrdad Talebi, Jamal Majidpoor, Sajad Najafi, Seyyed Mohammad Miryounesi, Seyed Mohsen Aghaei Zarch. Show more Received 12 **January 2022**, Revised 9 **September 2022**, Accepted 11 **September 2022**, Available online 22, **September 2022**, Version of Record 6 **October 2022**.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0898656822002662>

The complaint describes notification of alleged violations of RI for these two publications:

- Paper A: Non-coding RNA in SARS-CoV-2: progress toward therapeutic significance. The complainant describes the notification of three alleged violations of RI:
 - Reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misreading claims.
 - Manipulating authorship.
 - Expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations. This appeared as paper B in the notification form, but was detected as being in paper A.
- Paper B: MiR-211 plays a dual role in cancer development: From tumor suppressor to tumor enhancer. Cellular Signaling 101 (2023),

1 10504 The complainant describes the notification of two alleged violations of RI:

- Reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misreading claims.
- Manipulating authorship.
- In addition, during the preliminary investigation the complainant added an allegation "Expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations" for paper B.

The role of the Universities during the RCR process:

The Universities of Oulu and Jyväskylä discussed which of universities is the correct leader of the RCR-process in this matter. The rector of the University of Jyväskylä made the resolution on January 18, 2024, stating that they shall end the process without any preliminary inquiry.

The University of Jyväskylä stated that it is committed to complying with the RI 2023 Guidelines published by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK). The University of Jyväskylä investigated Shirvan's connections to their university. According to the information obtained from the information systems, Shirvani has never had an employment relationship with the University of Jyväskylä. She has received the right to study at the University of Jyväskylä for master's studies on August 1, 2022. She has not graduated, nor does she have a degree from the University of Jyväskylä.

The rector of the University of Jyväskylä stated based on the tentative investigation that the suspicious activity did not take place at the University of Jyväskylä. He stated that the University of Jyväskylä will not start the RI process, because without further action it is clear that the processing of the case does not fall under the competence of the University of Jyväskylä according to the HTK guideline of the Research Ethics Advisory Board. The rector of the University of Jyväskylä decided to end the processing of the case on his part with this decision delivered to the University of Oulu on January 18, 2024 (*Attachment 2*).

Preliminary Investigation:

The rector of the University of Oulu decided to initiate the preliminary inquiry on 2 February 2024 (*Attachment 3*) because Hanieh Shirvani has been employed at the University of Oulu as a research assistant from 1 May 2021 to 11 October 2021. Secondly, the reason for starting the preliminary investigation was that the University of Jyväskylä made the resolution not to do so. The complainant and the respondent had the opportunity to comment on the selection of the person conducting the preliminary inquiry before this decision was made. The preparer of the preliminary inquiry submitted the report to the Rector of the University of Oulu on 1 March 2024 (*Attachment 4*).

Report of the Preliminary Investigator:



In the preliminary investigation (*Attachment 4*) it is noted that a full investigation is not required. The respondent admitted in her response to the preliminary investigator that a RI violation has taken place as she has bought purchased authorship for both of these scientific publications (Paper A and Paper B) with 700 euro per article, so 1400 euro in total. The respondent has also provided the information to the publishers as part of the cancellation request.

The preliminary investigator also concludes that all the other alleged violations of RI have occurred, but that the respondent is not responsible for i) expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations or ii) reporting research results and methods in a careless manner, resulting in misleading claims, as she did not write either manuscript. The respondent had a possibility to comment on the preliminary investigation report.

According to the preliminary investigator in Paper A “The affiliation of the respondent is given as the University of Oulu and the publication can be found in OuluCRIS. The initial manuscript is listed by the journal as having been received on the 22nd January 2022 and the revised form on the 9th September 2022. Both of these falls outside the dates of employment of the respondent by the University of Oulu and as such they had no affiliation with the University of Oulu at the time of the initial or revised submission.”

According to the preliminary investigator in Paper B “The affiliation of the respondent is given as the Nanoscience Center and Department of Biological and Environmental Science, University of Jyväskylä. From information received from the University of Jyväskylä the respondent has no employment record at the University of Jyväskylä and they have a study right as an MSc student from 1st August 2022. The initial manuscript is listed by the journal as having been received on the 26th of August 2022 and the revised form on the 10th October 2022. During the preliminary investigation the respondent admitted that they had no association with the Nanoscience Center at the time of submission or resubmission and hence this may constitute an authorship-related violation.”

Rector’s Decision

According to the report of the preliminary investigator the respondent Hanieh Shirvani, student at the University of Jyväskylä, has admitted to the preliminary investigator that an RI violation has taken place. During the preliminary inquiry she admitted to investigator about paid authorship, with her payments to one of the coauthors for the authorship of both scientific publications. Hanieh Shirvani is not responsible for expanding the biography of a study to artificially increase the number of citations or reporting research results and methods in a careless manner as she did not write the manuscripts of the publications.

It is essential to note that the RI violation took place after the respondent had terminated her employment with the University of Oulu. As described above both manuscripts were listed by the journals after the employment was ended at the University of Oulu. Therefore, the University of Oulu was not the affiliation at the time of the initial or revised submission.

According to RCR 2012 (p. 36) RI 2023 Guidelines (p. 23) the allegation must be submitted to the organization in which the alleged misconduct has occurred or is presumed to occur. As a conclusion of both above-mentioned guidelines the correct and competent organization to make the resolution in this matter is the University of Jyväskylä.

The request for a statement from TENK

If the complainant or the respondent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the preliminary inquiry or the rector's decision, they may request a statement from TENK. This must be done within 30 days of receiving the rector's decision. The request for a statement must be justified and it must specify all the research integrity issues that the request concerns. The person requesting the statement must disclose what type of relation or involvement they may have in the case. More instructions on how to submit a request for a statement can be found on TENK's website (www.tenk.fi).



In Oulu 2 April 2024

Jouko Niinimäki
Rector of the University of Oulu

Essi Kiuru
Administrative Director of the University of Oulu

Attachments:

1. The alleged research integrity announcement
2. Decision of the rector of the University of Jyväskylä to end the processing of the case on his part
3. Decision of the rector of the University of Oulu to start the preliminary investigation
4. Preliminary inquiry report

Delivery to:

Complainant Alexander Magazinov
Respondent Hanieh Shirvani
The research integrity advisers of the University of Oulu
The rector of the University of Jyväskylä
TENK