

US-HKU Medical Journal Scandal

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An investigation into the alleged image plagiarism incident involving HKU medical research professors is underway as a leading US medical journal retracted two of their papers on liver transplantation.

Both papers retracted by the American Journal of Transplantation were originally published in 2006. Some images and figures appear to be unoriginal to the paper. The AJT said that “certain aspects of the figures were duplicated from other sources, rendering them scientifically invalid.” The HKU Faculty of Medicine is now launching their own internal investigation of the alleged plagiarism.

The investigation leading to the retraction began seven months ago by *The Intellectual*, a mainland magazine with origins at Peking University. *The Intellectual* received tips about 21 articles suspected of academic misconduct, and investigated them all. When the HKU professors were asked about the images’ origins from two of the articles, they could not provide clear information.

In the HKU handbook, plagiarism is stressed as a major academic offense. It states “It (plagiarism) constitutes academic theft - the offender has 'stolen' the work of others and presented the stolen work as if it were his or her own. It goes to the integrity and honesty of a person.” The thesis was written by dozens of members from Li Ka Shing Medical Faculty of HKU, including 3 professors as lead authors.

According to Apple Daily, one of the listed lead authors of the two articles, Emeritus Professor Fan Sheung-tat says he was not involved in writing the published papers. Apple Daily also reported that he has been banned from publishing in *Gastroenterology* after some images used in a paper he had co-wrote were found to have been plagiarized in 2008.

The Lion Post reached out to the 3 leading authors of this article but has received no follow-up.