

Primary Scientific Integrity Concerns Flagrantly Dismissed by Co-Authors, Journal of Neurochemistry, and Wiley-Blackwell

A major academic scandal of data fabrication and other serious scientific integrity concerns involving a professor with a history of retractions and error

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, USA, November 24, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A first author has raised

“

David Borchelt has intentionally and maliciously misled me, our co-authors, our readerships, our institutions, and the funding agencies.”

Aron Workman

serious scientific integrity concerns regarding the manuscript published in Journal of Neurochemistry (International Society for Neurochemistry) entitled “Distinctive features of the D101N and D101G variants of superoxide dismutase 1; two mutations that produce rapidly progressing motor neuron disease” by Jacob Ayers*, Herman Lelie*, Aron Workman*, Mercedes Prudencio*, Hilda Brown, Susan Fromholt, Joan Valentine, Julian Whitelegge, and David Borchelt (*authors contributed equally). [J. Neurochem. 128\(2\):305-14 is](#)

[available to the public](#) at <https://doi.org/10.1111/jnc.12451> (accessed January 14, 2023).

Aron Workman is shared first-author of the manuscript; David Borchelt is corresponding author of the manuscript. Workman asserts that “the data of [Figure 3](#) were probably entirely fabricated, the SI Figure has been allowed to exist in error, and the manuscript contains intrinsic human error.” Workman collected and analyzed the primary data of Figure 3 with a co-author at the University of California Los Angeles Analytical Core in June 2010. The possibility also exists that the data were ‘cherry picked’ or otherwise incorrectly processed just prior to figure preparation. Workman recognized and corrected several primary and secondary errors in the draft manuscript when under preparation.

Workman objected to the manuscript from a position of scientific integrity, and further objected to his name being included in the byline of the final manuscript. The final manuscript was published without Workman’s approval or consent. Workman has sought a full retraction of the manuscript and would also accept a simple erratum removing his nominal association with the manuscript and thus the research group.

Workman identified a major error in the manuscript following publication, yet the error has been

allowed to exist in the scientific press despite the agreed need for erratum. Workman wrote to corresponding author David Borchelt on June 8, 2016: "I just now saw the D101N&G SI figure at J. Neurochem; it has an obvious error. It incorrectly states that the standard to the left of the blot is 48 hour A4V. I am also unsure why there is a dotted line, as the blot is continuous. As you know, all the kinetics experiments were run with 24 hour A4V, never 48, in effort to match the 'relative aggregation propensity' of Hum Mol Gen." Borchelt replied "Not sure how the switch from 24 to 48 occurred. I will send the journal a corrected version of the Supplemental File. Error does not really change the data, but it could be important for those trying to replicate." However, Borchelt never sent the corrected version, and this obvious and non-trivial error in the crucial 'normalizing control' has been allowed to persist for a half decade (accessed January 14, 2023). Further, while under review, a referee raised the concern "In Figure 2B, the presentation of the data is somewhat confusing. Why do the authors choose to normalize each data to the 48 hour time point? This normalization masks the comparison of the magnitude of the insoluble fraction level between mutations." Workman responded on this point to co-authors "I completely agree with point 3 raised by reviewer 1 concerning my figure."; David Borchelt responded "The images shown in A create more issues- the intensity of the A4V band in D101G P2 is much lower than for D101N in these particular images and if we are using A4V as the normalization factor then the level of aggregates in D101G looks much bigger than it actually may be."

An erratum agreement was previously reached in 2016, and again raised and agreed by all co-authors in 2020; however, David Borchelt again intentionally misled Workman and co-authors, and furthermore did not even send the correspondence requesting the erratum to the editorial office. Additionally, Borchelt proposed a blatant mistruth in his proposed erratum: "Mr. A. Workman, who was an undergraduate student at the time the work in this paper was conducted, has decided after some years of reflection that his contribution to this paper was insufficient to merit authorship. He has requested that the authors issue a correction in which his name is removed from the author list. With this correction, we grant his request." In fact, insufficient contribution to the manuscript meriting authorship was never claimed in seeking its retraction or erratum: Workman contributed to the experimental conceptualization, design, methodology, curation, and analysis of the published time-course experiments. Workman proposed a correct erratum in correspondence to J. Neurochem. on January 14, 2023, but it was never published.

On February 14, 2020, Borchelt wrote to Workman regarding the issuance of an erratum. Borchelt wrote "If this is what you want me to do, please email back a conformation (sic)" to which Workman replied "yes, I confirm." On February 19, 2020, Borchelt wrote to Workman "your co-authors are willing to do the erratum if that is what you really want"; Workman again replied "yes, I confirm." On June 15, 2020, Borchelt wrote Workman: "On Feb 19, 2020 I sent an email inquiring about the possibility of issuing an erratum in response to your request and never received an answer from the journal." Workman then emailed Jörg Schulz, then Editor-in-Chief of Journal of Neurochemistry. Schulz wrote back on June 26, 2020 addressing the data integrity concerns by suggesting an institutional inquiry at the University of California Los Angeles.

In January 2023 correspondence from Workman to Lawrence, who is the current Editor in Chief

of Journal of Neurochemistry: "My analysis of the data of Fig. 3 from reproduced data sets and an exhaustive reexamination and recalculation from the raw numeric values leads me to conclude that the data were extensively fabricated or otherwise intentionally manipulated just prior to figure assembly and publication."

[Journal of Neurochemistry has not yet complied with the request](#) for retraction or published an erratum.

Email correspondences, raw data files, and pre-production manuscripts are available at request from Aron Workman at aworkman@ufl.edu.

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