

Prominent Huntington's disease researcher "fabricated data" in grant applications



Noted Huntington's disease researcher found to have falsified data on grant applications - but published findings sta

By Dr Ed Wild on January 06, 2013

Edited by Dr Jeff Carroll

The National Institute for Health's Office for Research Integrity has ruled that Huntington's disease researcher Dr Paul Muchowski, formerly of the Gladstone Institutes at University of California San Francisco, committed "research misconduct by falsifying and fabricating data" in several applications for funding. What does this mean for Muchowski's published HD therapies research?

The National Institute for Health's Office for Research Integrity has ruled that noted Huntington's disease researcher Dr Paul Muchowski, of the Gladstone Institutes at University of California, San Francisco, committed "research misconduct by falsifying and fabricating data" in several applications for funding. Muchowski has now resigned from his position with the Gladstone Institutes.

As the leader of a large Huntington's disease research group, Muchowski has been linked with some of the most eye-catching research breakthroughs in recent years - including drug candidates for KMO inhibition and CB2 activation. His findings have featured in some of the top scientific journals and we've reported on them here at HDBuzz.

Muchowski's applications for research funding were reviewed in detail by the Gladstone Institutes and the NIH. The investigation revealed four instances where work that was described as complete had in fact not been done, and one case where an image showing one type of brain cell was mislabelled as another type.

The NIH concluded that Muchowski had committed "research misconduct by falsifying and fabricating data". Muchowski accepted the ruling and agreed to have his research supervised for two years, but the NIH has allowed him to keep his funding and apply for future grants.

So does this ruling mean that some Huntington's disease research findings are now in question? The full facts of the case may not emerge for some time, but it's reassuring that after two detailed investigations, nobody involved has yet called for the withdrawal of any of Muchowski's published research, according to our sources.

Equally importantly, independent researchers working on the KMO and CB2 pathways, and other findings of Muchowski's group, have carried out research that supports those published results. So - as far as we can tell on the basis of the information available right now - this development doesn't mean we have to abandon those promising lines of enquiry.

We're sorry to be kicking off our 2013 research news coverage with such a dark cloud, but take it from us, there's sunnier news on the way.

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. For more information about our disclosure policy see our FAQ...

Glossary

KMO kynurenine mono-oxygenase, an enzyme that controls the balance of harmful and protective chemicals resulting from the breakdown of proteins

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