



NEWS

Former editor who fabricated data is suspended for four months

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A former editor of the *British Journal of Diabetes* who was found last April to have fabricated research data and forged the signatures of coauthors has been suspended from the UK medical register for four months.

Paul Grant had been appointed editor in chief of *Clinical Medicine*, the journal of the Royal College of Physicians, when allegations surfaced of irregularities in five research papers he submitted. He never took up the post.

Two of the papers were published and later retracted. The most serious allegations concerned a study of anxiety and depression in 350 patients with type 1 diabetes who received insulin pump therapy at King's College Hospital in London.¹

When Grant realised that he lacked complete age data for his cohort he fabricated these and also the prevalence of psychiatric morbidity, a medical practitioners tribunal found.

He also named coauthors in papers without their approval. He forged colleagues' signatures and failed to notify real coauthors of changes and manuscript submissions he had made, the tribunal found. His acknowledgments routinely thanked a fictitious mentor, "Dr Derek Lington."²

The findings against Grant were made in April, and his fitness to practise was deemed impaired, but the tribunal adjourned until this month after running out of time before it could decide on a sanction.

The General Medical Council asked for his registration to be suspended but made no recommendations as to its length. Grant had missed several early opportunities to realise that he was on the "wrong track" in his research efforts and to mend his ways, the GMC argued.

Research information in the public domain had needed retraction, the GMC noted, with implications for the reputations of coauthors and of the journals.

Grant's counsel asked for conditions to be imposed on his registration, or a suspension of less than three months, noting that he had made no financial gain and harmed no patients. He had since decided to cease publishing research and instead focus on clinical work, removing any risk of repetition.

Grant now works as a consultant at a community based diabetes programme he set up in Sussex. The tribunal heard testimonials from colleagues and patients praising his work there.

The six month adjournment had given Grant additional time to reflect and show remorse in a monthly personal log, said the tribunal's chair, Sean Ell.

"You acknowledge that you have no future in medical writing or publishing," Ell told Grant, noting that he had also stepped down from a NICE guidance committee and as a Royal College of Physicians college officer "in order to help protect their reputations."

Research misconduct was a particularly serious form of dishonesty and often brought a long suspension, noted Ell. The tribunal wished to signal that Grant's conduct was "wholly unacceptable," he said.

"But it determined that in your circumstances, bearing in mind your extensive reflection demonstrating remediation, a period of four months was sufficient to meet the tribunal's overarching objective. The tribunal is satisfied that erasure would be a disproportionate sanction."

- 1 Grant P, Dworakowska D, DeZoysa N, Barnes D. The impact of anxiety and depression on patients within a large type 1 diabetes insulin pump population. An observational study. *Diabetes Metab* 2013;39:439-44. doi:10.1016/j.diabet.2013.06.00324076359
- 2 Dyer C. Former journal editor is found guilty of data fabrication. *BMJ* 2017;357:j1804. doi:10.1136/bmj.j180428396560

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