

Animal Experiments at Soochow University Was Approved by Kohat University

Concerns are raised regarding the ethical approval in an article [1] published on "Materials", a MDPI title.

The article [1], which reported the TiO₂ Nanoparticles' effect on inhibiting breast cancer in BALB/c mice, has authors from Soochow University (苏州大学) and other institutions in multiple nations, including China, Pakistan, as well as the United States. Three of the five co-first authors were from Soochow University, one was from International Islamic University, Pakistan, and one was from California Innovations Corporation, the United States.

In the "Author Contributions" section, the article [1] states that experimental work was conducted by Haroon Iqbal (Soochow University), Anam Razzaq (Soochow University), and Farid Menaa (California Innovations Corporation). However, the ethical approval was claimed to be obtained from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee of Kohat University, Pakistan, with Permit Number of 2019-89.

No author from Kohat University was listed on the article [1], but the article [1] has an author from Kohat University of Science and Technology, named Muslim Khan. His contributions were stated as "Conceptualization, and Formal analysis".

Therefore, concerns are raised whether the researchers in Soochow University and California Innovations Corporation obtained the ethical approval from their institutions before the animal experiments were conducted.

Nowadays, more and more journals in materials science are publishing articles about medical treatment using nano-materials. However, the editors in such journals seem not familiar to the requirement of ethical approval for animal/human experiments. Although some other articles [2-3] published on "Materials" do state that the authors obtained ethical approvals from their own institutions, they do not disclose the approval numbers of the cases, bringing obstacles to double check the information.

Paper mills are taking advantages of the editors' unfamiliarity with ethical requirement of

animal experiments to have their manuscripts accepted for publication. Such in the case of the article [1], although its authorship is very fishy, and there are some issues of the figures [4], the article [1] finally got published.

The 5GH Team wishes to remind editors that ethical approval may serve as an important indicator for determining whether a manuscript originates from a paper mill.

[1] 10.3390/ma14123155

[2] 10.3390/ma11102041

[3] 10.3390/ma15103440

[4] <https://pubpeer.com/publications/9A59D79623DDD346C144A8297D84C4>

This article is licensed to the 5GH Foundation under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License.