

Dear Dr. Puebla and COPE committee,

After reading the response that Dr. Eggleton sent you on December 9, we are contacting you 1) to provide additional contextual information and 2) to express our concerns about her response.

1) We would like to make the following two points clear:

a) We are not interested in having our Letters published for any personal or career-related reasons. None of us will gain anything professionally from their publication.

b) We are acting solely out of a strong sense of social responsibility, given the enormous social implications of this matter. The aim of our Letters is to draw attention to the grave scientific flaws in the two papers, which include but go well beyond the use of unconsented data. The papers have already contributed to an underestimation of the individual dose rates of people in areas affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and if their scientific flaws are not fully and publicly clarified, they will continue to influence government policy and social understanding in a way that may harm human health. The retraction of the papers for the reasons given is an insufficient response in this respect^[1].

2) We have a number of concerns about the response provided by Dr. Eggleton. The most serious of these are explained below.

a) In the first point in the timeline, it states that "One methodological error (identified in the first Letter) was also corrected in one of the retraction notices." The single methodological error mentioned in the retraction notice is in the last paragraph of

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1361-6498/ab9ff0>

This issue was in fact identified in the fourth Letter:

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2003.05403>

Not only was that Letter neither published nor cited, but also the error was referred to in an extremely inadequate and erroneous way in the retraction notice:

- The retraction notice claims that the error was identified "Based on the investigation report". However, none of the investigation reports by the universities contains any reference to the error (a figure in Table 1). Also, the investigation report by Date city was

published on 17 March 2020 (and contained no explicit reference to this error), while our Letter was provisionally accepted on 16 March 2020.

- This error is not only a problem of a single number in Table 1, but suggests that the dataset of 2013 Q4 is mistaken, hence could affect the whole paper (including the second paper). No such concern is expressed in the retraction notice.
- In the other three Letters (provisionally accepted by JRP) we have pointed out a number of other errors, methodological problems and doubts that affect the main results of the retracted papers.

<https://arxiv.org/abs/2001.11912>

<https://arxiv.org/abs/1812.11453> (contains two Letters)

None of these issues has been mentioned in the retraction notices or in the editorial note.

b) Dr. Eggleton says that "Allegations of misconduct are managed according to COPE guidelines" and cites the ethical policy for IOP journals

<https://publishingsupport.iopscience.iop.org/ethical-policy-journals/>

which claims to follow the COPE guidelines. However, the COPE flowchart on "Suspected fabricated data in a published manuscript"

https://publicationethics.org/files/Full%20set%20of%20English%20flowcharts_9Nov2016.pdf

clearly instructs journals to "Contact author's institution requesting an investigation", and if "No or unsatisfactory response" is given, the journal should "Publish expression of concern" (or "contact a regulatory body"). As the universities have refused to reply to the query of JRP, it must publish an EOC on the points raised in our Letters. However, the only EOC published by JRP is this one on 11 January 2019

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1361-6498/aa6094>

where no detail of the methodological miscalculation is given and no reference is made to any of the other errors identified in our Letters.

c) Dr. Eggleton says that "All IOPP journals follow the same policy relating to corrections" and cites this policy

<https://publishingsupport.iopscience.iop.org/questions/post-publication-corrections-to-journal-articles/>

Yet, in the retraction notices and the editorial note,

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1361-6498/ab9ff0>

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1361-6498/ab9ff1>

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1361-6498/aba42a>

the only error ever mentioned in a concrete fashion (not vaguely as "various technical issues within Letter *") is the one about 2013 Q4 which we have seen is inadequately addressed, and there is no explicit reference to the other errors and problems we described in our Letters. No corrigendum or erratum has been published by JRP, and the only expression of concern is the one on 11 January 2019 which addresses only one of the methodological miscalculations. Even this last one has disappeared from the retraction notices and the editorial note.

Altogether, we believe that the scientific record of the retracted papers has not been corrected properly and the errors and problems pointed out in our Letters must be reported in the journal.

We would kindly ask COPE to take into account these points in its consideration of this matter.

Best regards,

Kyo Kageura
Yoh Tanimoto,
Shin-ichi Kurokawa
Jun Makino
Yutaka Hamaoka
Masaki Oshikawa

Note [1]: To give one example, the Radiation Council of Japan has recommended, based on research including the two papers, that the acceptable degree of food contamination and the criteria for decontamination after nuclear accidents should be reconsidered, as the current standards hinder the reconstruction of affected areas, including the return of evacuated people. After the use of unconsented data in the two papers was raised, the Radiation Council removed the papers from its reference list but did not change its recommendation, stating that the scientific conclusions in the papers were not totally denied. If the scientific record of the retracted papers is not properly corrected by JRP, the weakness in this part of the grounds of the Radiation Council's recommendation will not be revealed.