



## EDITORIAL

# Un estrepitoso caso de fraude científico

## A flagrant case of scientific fraud

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Recibido el 20 de mayo de 2011; aceptado el 20 de mayo de 2011

El fraude científico existe y aunque no conocemos su frecuencia, se sospecha que es muy superior a la que se detecta.

Recientemente se ha detectado un caso con una enorme trascendencia y ha obligado a la retirada de 88 artículos publicados por el doctor Joachim Blodt en revistas internacionales (Anexo 1). El detonante fue una serie de cartas-denuncia tras la publicación de un artículo (Joachim Boldt, Stephan Suttner, Christian Brosch, Andreas Lehmann, Kerstin Röhm, and Andinet Mengistu. *Anesthesia & Analgesia*. 2009;109:1752-1762), basadas en la sospecha de fabricación fraudulenta de datos, lo que originó una investigación y una serie de peticiones de pruebas al Dr. Boldt a las que no contestó y por tanto no pudo refutar la acusación de fraude en los datos. La investigación se extendió a otras publicaciones en las que aparecía como primer firmante o coautor con el resultado que antes he mencionado de la retirada de 88 artículos, todos del ámbito de la medicina intensiva y de anestesia.

La causa fundamental de la denuncia realizada por Steven L. Shafer director editorial de *Anesthesia & Analgesia* ha sido la falta de su aprobación por el Comité Ético, en su caso el *Landesärztekammer Rheinland-Pfalz*, la falta de aleatorización y de la firma del consentimiento informado por parte de los pacientes. Estas publicaciones han sido consideradas no éticas ya que la alusión en las mismas a este

comité fue falsificada. Actualmente hay un comité de investigación que está analizando los datos de los que dispone su institución para verificar si además de falsificar la aprobación del *Landesärztekammer Rheinland-Pfalz*, los datos de los artículos confirman sus resultados. Aunque hay informaciones que avalarían tanto la ausencia de aleatorización de pacientes como la falsificación de determinados datos, se está a la espera de los resultados de la investigación en curso para aclarar la magnitud del fraude, que incluso podría tener consecuencias penales, como ya ha sucedido en Massachusetts con el especialista en dolor Scott Reuben quien estuvo preso seis meses.

Este desagradable asunto tiene aspectos morbosos que no queremos alimentar pero consideramos que su trascendencia justifica la difusión para el conocimiento de los lectores de *Medicina Intensiva*.

Queremos aprovechar la ocasión para hacer algunas consideraciones que por sabidas, no dejan de ser pertinentes, especialmente en este momento. Me refiero a los motivos, siempre injustificables, que pueden inducir a casos como el que estamos tratando. La necesidad de mantener el prestigio y alimentar el ego de los investigadores puede ser un aliciente para estas prácticas fraudulentas pero también hay motivos más terrenales como la necesidad de currículum y de obtención de resultados que permitan mantener o conseguir ayudas institucionales para dar continuidad al trabajo de muchos investigadores. Otro elemento a considerar es sin duda la implicación de compañías con enormes intereses económicos que pueden enturbiar la relación entre científicos y empresas. En este caso el Dr. Bolt, cuyo estudio versa sobre hidroxietil almidón, tiene conflictos de interés con varias empresas productoras del fármaco. Esta relación, que

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por otra parte es imprescindible y está fuertemente incentivada por las administraciones sanitarias, se sustenta en un frágil equilibrio que ha de tener como objetivo irrenunciable la búsqueda de la verdad. No obstante este objetivo es en ocasiones ambiguo ya que existen matices, probablemente justificados por la falta de uniformidad biológica que hace que lo que funciona en determinadas circunstancias, en otras no lo hace, pero se tiende a la generalización.

Es importante señalar que el fraude científico no solo daña la credibilidad de la publicación que aceptó el manuscrito, también daña a los lectores que pueden llegar a cambiar sus prácticas médicas utilizando las conclusiones del estudio fraudulento y de esta forma termina dañando a los pacientes.

Como resumen, el caso que mostramos ha de servir para reforzarnos en nuestra exigencia de transparencia y de un exquisito seguimiento formal de normas éticas que siempre son la mejor garantía de la calidad de la investigación.

## Anexo I.

Relación de artículos retirados:

### A.1. Acta Anaesthesiologica Scandinavica

- Mengistu AM, Mayer J, Boldt J, Röhm KD. Whole-blood aggregometry: are there any limits with regard to platelet counts? *Acta Anaesthesiol Scand.* 2009;53:72-76.
- Röhm KD, Piper SN, Suttner S, Schuler S, Boldt J. Early recovery, cognitive function and costs of a desflurane inhalational vs. a total intravenous anaesthesia regimen in long-term surgery. *Acta Anaesthesiol. Scand.* 2006;50:14-18.
- Boldt J, Kumle B, Suttner S, Haisch G. Point-of-care (POC) testing of lactate in the intensive care patient. Accuracy, reliability, and costs of different measurement systems. *Acta Anaesthesiol Scand.* 2001;45:194-199.

### A.2. Anaesthesia

- Röhm KD, Riechmann J, Boldt J, Schuler S, Suttner SW, Piper SN. Physostigmine for the prevention of postanaesthetic shivering following general anaesthesia - a placebo-controlled comparison with nefopam. *Anaesthesia.* 2005;60:433-438.
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- Piper SN, Kumle B, Maleck WH, Suttner SW, Fent MT, Boldt J. Effects of postoperative sedation with propofol and midazolam on pancreatic function assessed by pancreatitis-associated protein. *Anaesthesia.* 2001;56:836-840.
- Piper SN, Suttner SW, Schmidt CC, Kumle B, Maleck WH, Boldt J. Acute phase response to nitroprusside-induced

controlled hypotension in patients undergoing radical prostatectomy. *Anaesthesia.* 2000;55:131-136.

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### A.3. Anästhesiologie Intensivmedizin Notfallmedizin Schmerztherapie

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- Piper SN, Kumle B, Röhm KD, Suttner SW, Lang J, Blome M, Boldt J. Influence of cardiopulmonary bypass (CPB) on the natriuretic peptides ANP and BNP. A comparison between long and short duration of CPB and off pump surgery. *Anesthesiol Intensivmed Notfallmed Schmerzther.* 2003;38:463-469.
- Piper SN, Röhm KD, Papsdorf M, Maleck WH, Mattinger P, Boldt J. Dolasetron reduces pain on injection of propofol. *Anesthesiol Intensivmed Notfallmed Schmerzther.* 2002;37:528-531.

### A.4. Anesthesia & Analgesia

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### A.13. Journal of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Anesthesia

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### A.17. The Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeon

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### A.18. Vox Sanguinis

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