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## SCIENCE

# Why Did Journal Retract Study Showing COVID Vaccines May Cause Cancer? Emails Raise New Questions

*An NIH scientist with ties to pharma and the Wuhan Institute of Virology oversaw the retraction of a 2021 peer-reviewed study linking COVID-19 vaccines to cancer risk, especially for women, according to emails obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.*

by John-Michael Dumais

JUNE 7, 2024



A **recent investigation** by Australian journalist Rebekah Barnett suggests politics and financial interests, not scientific concerns, led to the retraction of a 2021 peer-reviewed study finding the **spike protein from SARS-CoV-2** and the mRNA vaccine impair critical DNA repair mechanisms, which could lead to cancer.

**Viruses**, published by **MDPI**, retracted the study in 2022, despite objections by the lead author, **Ya-Fang Mei, Ph.D.**, of Sweden's Umeå University.

**Subsequent research** and **case studies** have largely validated the findings of the retracted study conducted by Mei and **Hui Jiang, Ph.D.**, of Stockholm University in Sweden.



Barnett's investigation, built on work by independent journalist **John Davidson** and **Dr. Ah Kahn Syed**, included emails released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) revealing that **Eric O. Freed, Ph.D.**, editor-in-chief of *Viruses*, oversaw its retraction.

Freed, a **scientist with the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, suggested the retraction could proceed without evidence of scientific misconduct, raising questions about his impartiality.

The study's co-author originally requested the retraction. However, Mei strongly objected, claiming Stockholm University "forced" the retraction due to external pressure.

The NIH rejected **Davidson's FOIA request** for Freed's emails related to the retraction, citing trade secret exemptions. However, Barnett's FOIA to Stockholm University uncovered some of these emails.

Barnett's article contains images of many FOIA'd emails describing the progression of arguments among various scientists and journal and university personnel leading up to the retraction.


**Thomas Anthony III**  




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TLDR: A paper was published in October showing how the mRNA vaccines could massively impact ovarian and breast cancer risk. Two scientists linked to the NIH and Pharma conspired to remove it from publication - putting a generation of women at risk.

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## Retracted paper showed spike protein could cause cancer

Mei and Jiang found that the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein — and its mRNA-vaccine-derived analog — significantly **inhibits DNA damage repair**, which is essential for maintaining genomic stability and preventing **cancer**.

The researchers demonstrated that the spike protein localizes in the cell nucleus and inhibits DNA repair by hindering the recruitment of key repair proteins **BRCA1** (breast cancer type 1 susceptibility protein) and 53BP1 (**p53-binding protein 1**) to the damage site.

The spike protein's suppression of the p53 gene, known as the "**guardian of the genome**," is particularly concerning, as the gene is crucial in preventing cancer development — particularly, breast, ovarian and other **cancers** affecting women.

Moreover, the study found that the spike protein impairs **V(D)J recombination**, a complex genetic process occurring in the early stages of T and B lymphocyte development, which are key components of the adaptive immune system.

This process is essential for generating a diverse repertoire of T-cell receptors and antibodies (immunoglobulins) that can recognize and combat a wide range of pathogens.

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### 'Not clear' if public pressure or faulty science led to retraction

Published on Oct. 13, 2021, the Mei and Jiang paper was among the first to draw the connection between **mRNA vaccination and immune suppression**. It generated significant publicity, garnering over a half-million downloads in its first month.

The retraction process was unusual. On Nov. 9, 2021, Jiang, the study's co-author, **requested the retraction**. MDPI more than once balked at Jiang's request, citing a lack of evidence of scientific error and acknowledging the paper had stirred up "some publicity."

**Oliver Schildgen, Ph.D.**, MDPI's academic editor who originally accepted the paper, in a Nov. 21, 2021, letter to Freed described Jiang's letter as "rather generic." He said it was "not clear if the public pressure or scientific faults were the cause for the request."

Outside pressure mounted from the likes of German scientist **Götz Schuck, Ph.D.** — not a virologist or even a biologist but a materials scientist — who wrote several emails to Schildgen claiming the paper was being "instrumentalized as a source of misinformation" and alleging MDPI had been "hacked by **anti-vaccinationists**."

Numerous **fact-checking organizations** contacted Stockholm University to question the validity of the paper. The university, responding to the mounting pressures, ultimately forced the retraction.

The May 2022 **MDPI retraction notice** stated that the study's experimental design and methods could have inaccurately characterized the spike protein's effects on DNA repair mechanisms and immune function.

Lead author Mei never signed the retraction notice, stating that the reasons cited for the retraction were "unfounded and the **retraction is unjustified**."

In a **June 2 Substack post**, genomics expert **Kevin McKernan** wrote, "The retraction argument given [by MDPI] was an absurd questioning of the use of **Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP)** in biological assays. To retract this paper over that assay will make 1000 other papers fall."

Freed stated the “retraction of a paper does not require evidence of scientific misconduct” but could result from unreliable data and “honest mistakes” leading to faulty conclusions.

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### NIH blocked release of key documents

Davidson, who was investigating the retraction, in 2022 submitted a FOIA request for emails between Freed and Schildgen.

The NIH took eight months to respond, identifying 490 pages of emails that it refused to release, claiming they contained trade secrets and confidential commercial information.

Davidson appealed the decision, arguing that releasing these communications would have “an important public health benefit” and that the NIH had “failed to give sufficient weight to the public’s interest in disclosure,” but his appeal was denied.

In an article published Monday, Davidson alleged the emails “show that the **NIH was aware that spike protein** in the **COVID-19 vaccines** would cause an increase in cancers.”

Syed (pseudonym, also known as Arkmedic), one of the original investigators, noted that the retraction’s timing was also suspect, as between the initial letter of concern to MDPI in December 2021 and the paper’s retraction in May 2022, “billions of people were continuing to receive Covid vaccine injections” according to Barnett.

Barnett told **The Defender** that Mei alleges Jiang was “forced” to request retraction of his article.

“I don’t know what it would take to get a scientist to publicly discredit his own work and then never speak about it,” Barnett said.

Adding further mystery to the retraction, Jiang has seemingly disappeared.

Barnett said none of Jiang’s colleagues would say “whether he left Stockholm University of his own accord or was counseled to leave,” nor could they provide any information about his whereabouts or well-being.

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### 'Final thread by which the failing process of peer-review is hanging'

Syed, on Substack, highlighted the **"web of vested interests in the cover-up."**

Freed, a senior HIV researcher at the NIH, has ties to Gilead Sciences, a pharmaceutical company that manufactures **remdesivir** and drugs for p53-related cancers like breast cancer and lymphoma.

Gilead is also a major funder of HIV research and has sponsored **HIV symposiums** organized by Freed and the NIH, Syed said.

Freed has co-authored publications with researchers from the **Wuhan Institute of Virology**, including **"bat lady" Shi Zhengli**, a key figure in the COVID-19 **lab-leak controversy**.

Syed said the investigation "clearly shows that the retraction only occurred because of manufactured political pressure which resulted in a forced 'hostage' style request to retract by Hui Jiang ('the ghost') that Ya-Fang Mei refused to agree to, correctly."

Such pressure is "precisely the reason NOT to retract a scientifically sound paper," Syed asserted.

Noting that the FOIA documents also showed that three experts approved the original Jiang and Mei manuscript as valid, Syed said, "It is the final thread by which the failing process of peer-review is hanging."

Syed posed this question:

"If an editor of a journal, with the power to retract a paper showing that a new product carries significant risk, works for an institution that co-funds or directly manufactures that product, do they have a conflict of interest in retracting such a paper?"

In response to the controversy, Davidson organized an online **petition to force the NIH to release the Freed emails**. The petition is still accepting signatures.

Davidson's investigations of the retracted paper can be found under "**NIHGate**" on his Substack, **BrokenTruth.tv**.



**John-Michael Dumais**

John-Michael Dumais is a news editor for The Defender. He has been a writer and community organizer on a variety of issues, including the death penalty, war, health freedom and all things related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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