

## AUTHOR REPLY

# Learning from a controversy

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We would like to thank Chungeng Pan, Xiaochu Ma and Shibo Jiang for their correspondence on our Perspectives ([XMRV and prostate cancer—a ‘final’ perspective](#). *Nat. Rev. Urol.* **9**, 111–118; 2012),<sup>1</sup> which raises some important issues (What can academia learn from XMRV studies? *Nat. Rev. Urol.* doi:10.1038/nrurol.2011.225-c1), and appreciate the important points raised in their comments. They suggest that competitive pressure drives investigators to jump into hot topics, such as new, possibly pathogenic viruses. We would certainly agree that this pressure is a likely contributing factor, but we favor a somewhat more positive motivation, believing that the principal impetus attracting scientists to these areas

is their tremendous potential implications for improving public health.

Pan *et al.*<sup>2</sup> also opine that journals are more interested in publishing positive data than negative data. We feel that this bias toward exciting results and against negative claims is a serious problem—it very likely delayed the resolution of the apparent contradictions regarding XMRV and, therefore, prolonged the diversion of precious research time and money into this blind alley. We thank Pan *et al.* for bringing this important point to the attention of the readers of *Nature Reviews Urology*.

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**Competing interests**

The authors declare no competing interests.

1. Sfanos, K. S., Aloia, A. L., De Marzo, A. M. & Rein, A. XMRV and prostate cancer—a ‘final’ perspective. *Nat. Rev. Urol.* **9**, 111–118 (2012).
2. Pan, C. Ma, X. & Jiang, S. *Nat. Rev. Urol.* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/nrurol.2011.225-c1> (2012).