International recruitment highlights need to track scientific behaviour

San Diego. The increasingly tough stand being taken by US institutions against those committing misconduct in research is creating a new group of scientific fugitives — researchers who seek posts in laboratories abroad after investigations by American institutions cast a cloud over their careers.

Thus a number of scientists alleged to have fabricated research data, to have falsified their academic credentials, or suspected of sabotaging experiments of their colleagues, have moved to research posts in Europe, after inquiries into their activities in the United States.

But this phenomenon has raised questions about how research institutions can obtain clear information about the history of researchers they intend to appoint, particularly if such researchers move to countries that lack a well-defined system for dealing with allegations of misconduct.

"This is a serious problem around the world," says Martin Raff, professor of biology at University College London, adding that there tends to be a lack of communication between institutions on fraud problems. "These cases keep occurring, but there seems to be no good way of dealing with them. The problem is a fear of litigation. Something needs to be done."

Stephen P. Lock, a former editor of the *British Medical Journal* and now a research fellow at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine in London, describes the situation as a "a storm signal".

In the era of faxes and electronic mail, Lock points out, there is no excuse for not checking a scientist's credentials. But, in the face of a growing number of civil lawsuits in individual countries, international monitoring faces considerable challenges.

A typical case involves Kimon J. Angelides, a 44-year-old neurobiologist, who moved to the University of Durham in Britain last year, after losing his post at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, for allegedly fabricating research data. Last August, Angelides filed lawsuits in state and federal courts in Houston against Baylor and the key officials in the university's investigation. Angelides is suing for defamation, blacklisting, wrongful termination and breach of contract, claiming that he had brought more than $7 million in research grants to Baylor.

In his lawsuit, Angelides states that Baylor terminated his contract in March 1995 after the university's investigating committee had found that he had falsified or fabricated data in five scientific articles and in grant applications to the US National Institutes of Health (NIH). After the verdict, Angelides, who had been at Baylor since 1986 and was a tenured professor in the departments of cell biology and biochemistry, was escorted from his laboratory by university security guards.

Baylor subsequently notified the NIH of the findings of its investigation, prompting the agency's Office of Research Integrity (ORI) to open an inquiry. ORI officials decline to comment, as the agency has not reached a conclusion on the case. Sam Crocker, Baylor's counsel, also declines to comment, as does Angelides, who is now a professor of cell biology in the department of biological sciences at Durham.

James V. Pianelli, Angelides' attorney, describes Baylor's procedures as flawed. "There was denial of due process," he says. "Allegations were made by folks with axes to grind." A trial date of February 1997 has been set for Angelides' civil lawsuit against Baylor. ORI has put its investigation in abeyance until after the trial, says Pianelli.

Asked what Durham knew about the allegations against Angelides, Evelyn A.V. Ebsworth, the university's vice-chancellor, said: "I am not aware of the details of the problems. I have discussed some difficulties at Baylor."

Earlier in his career, Angelides fell foul of officials at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. In 1980, officials say, he was found to have listed false academic credentials in a *curriculum vitae*, which also included misleading citations for research articles that were not published.

Rose M. Johnstone, then chairwoman of McGill's biochemistry department, says she discovered by "a fluke" that Angelides had padded his CV with four or five unpublished articles and falsely listed an undergraduate degree from Harvard University. Angelides received his undergraduate degree from Lawrence University in Wisconsin. His doctorate in chemistry came from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Johnstone says that she requested Angelides to resign, adding that she never wrote him a letter of recommendation. "He said I was making a terrible mistake because he would have brought notoriety to the department," Johnstone says. "I said that was one thing we didn't need."

Pianelli denies that Angelides misrepresented his credentials or research at McGill. Angelides left Canada for the University of Florida's College of Medicine in Gainesville, where officials say he was never investigated or found to have engaged in impropriety. But there were questions about his research.

"He was someone who could dazzle you with an enormous amount of research," ▶

Rotation experiment returns to Cologne

Munich. **A famous experiment to prove that the Earth spins on its axis, originally conducted in 1852, was recently repeated in the southern transept of Cologne Cathedral, Germany's largest cathedral (right), to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of the physicist Caspar Garthe.**

Garthe suspended a lead-filled brass bowl on a steel wire from the cathedral's 45-metre-high chancel, and used two wedge-shaped scales placed just above the floor to measure its deviation from its plane of swing, a proof of the Earth's rotation.

The admission fee of 20 silver groschen, paid by 1,000 visitors during one month of daily performances, was used to help construct the Gothic cathedral. In 1851, a year before Garthe, the French physicist Léon Foucault more famously repeated the experiment in the Panthéon in Paris. □

Boecker

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