

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

Like crime, scientific misconduct ultimately doesn't pay. For the two high-profile cases of data fabrication in recent years — Jan Hendrik Schön of Bell Laboratories and Woo Suk Hwang of Seoul National University — the price was a ruined reputation and dismissal. Others found guilty of similar misdeeds have found themselves barred from doing research or from receiving federal funds (see *Nature Med.* **12**, 490–494; May 2006).

But what of the innocent parties caught up in the crossfire? Postdocs and graduate students working under a principal investigator who is found guilty of misconduct can find themselves tainted by association. At the very least, they will face setbacks in their careers — what use to any author is a retracted paper? And there is little point in asking your adviser for a letter of reference if he or she has been discredited.

People working under an adviser whom they know to be engaged in misconduct face a difficult choice. If they do nothing, then they stand a chance of completing their studies and moving on to a different lab — but if their adviser is eventually found out, they risk being judged as guilty by association. If, on the other hand, they choose to blow the whistle, life can become very uncomfortable. In many instances, young scientists who report incidences of misconduct by their seniors can face as much scrutiny as the people they have accused (see *Nature* **441**, 122–123; 2006).

To resolve these issues, and to minimize any risk of fraudulent behaviour, we need a new system that protects whistleblowers. Such a system would give universities, funding agencies and journals clear roles and guidelines for policing fraud. It would also, by necessity, shift the burden of proof from the accuser on to the accused.

If trainees find themselves in the unfortunate position of having to point out questionable research practices, they should be able to do so without worrying that they could damage their career. This is especially true when you consider that not blowing the whistle could have even worse long-term effects.

Paul Smaglik, *Naturejobs* editor

CONTACTS

Publisher: Ben Crowe
Editor: Paul Smaglik

European Head Office, London

The Macmillan Building,
4 Crinan Street
London N1 9XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4961
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

European Sales Manager:

Andy Douglas (4975)

Natureevents:

Matt Betteridge (4015)

UK/RoW/Ireland:

Nils Moeller (4953)

Scandinavia/Spain/Portugal:

Claudia Paulsen Young (4973)

France/Switzerland/Belgium/Italy:

Maria Ceraolo (4994)

Germany/Austria/The Netherlands:

Reya Silao (4970)

Business Development Manager:

Amelie Pequignot (4974)

Advertising Production Manager:

Stephen Russell

To send materials use London
address above.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996

e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

Naturejobs web development:

Tom Hancock

Naturejobs online production:

Catherine Alexander

European Satellite Office

Germany:

Patrick Phelan

Tel: +49 89 54 90 57 11

Fax: +49 89 54 90 57 20

e-mail: p.phelan@nature.com

US Head Office, New York

75 Varick Street,

9th Floor, New York,

NY 10013-1917

Tel: +1 800 989 7718

Fax: +1 800 989 7103

e-mail: naturejobs@natureny.com

US Sales Manager:

Peter Bless

Japan Head Office, Tokyo

Chiyoda Building,

2-37 Ichigayatamachi,

Shinjuku-ku,

Tokyo 162-0843

Tel: +81 3 3267 8751

Fax: +81 3 3267 8746

Asia-Pacific Sales Director:

Ayako Watanabe

e-mail: a.watanabe@natureasia.com