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Journal to Examine How It Reviewed Articles

 By [NICHOLAS WADE](#)

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Science magazine, the leading scientific journal that published [Dr. Hwang Woo Suk's](#) two now-discredited reports on cloning human cells, said yesterday that it would evaluate how the articles had been reviewed and search for ways to improve its procedures.

The journal's statement followed the announcement yesterday by an investigatory panel of Seoul National University that Dr. Hwang had never generated embryonic stem cells from human cells, as he reported in articles in March 2004 and June 2005.

The 2005 paper was retracted by the authors, and the journal is now retracting the 2004 paper.

Journal editors have usually taken the position that their reviewers cannot be expected to detect fabrication. This was the view expressed by Donald Kennedy, the editor of Science, and Philip Campbell, the editor of Nature, at an earlier phase of the Hwang scandal.

Nature has emerged the luckier of the two journals, having published only Dr. Hwang's claim that he had cloned a dog, Snuppy. The Seoul panel said yesterday that Snuppy was a true clone.

Science, however, must recover from publishing the two articles on human embryonic stem cells, which seemed to bring therapeutic cloning - treating patients with new tissues generated from their own cells - almost within reach.

One change Science is considering is to require a statement from each author describing his or her contribution to an article. These statements would be published, probably online,

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Dr. Kennedy said.

By longstanding practice, scientific reports carry only a list of authors. The first and last named authors generally garner most of the credit for a discovery. The custom is that the first author is the one who did most of the research and the last is the most senior author.

Authors may also be required to sign statements saying that they agree with a report's conclusions.

Dr. Kennedy said in an interview that the review system could not be relied on to prevent fraud.

"I do not think a perfect system can be designed for detecting fraud, and I do not think we can make a dramatic improvement in our capacity to detect it," he said.

Benjamin Lewin, a former editor of the journal Cell, said the requirement to state individual contributions might prevent scientists from getting an authorship credit when they had made a minor contribution or raised money. "If this proposal took hold, it wouldn't be a bad thing since you would have a better sense of people's contributions," he said.

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