

## News Releases

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SUBJECT: Statement from Memorial University of Newfoundland re: Dr. Ranjit Chandra and research integrity  
DATE: Feb. 3, 2006

Memorial University of Newfoundland takes issue with assertions that suggest the university took little or no action in regard to allegations of research fraud leveled against former faculty member and former Janeway Hospital employee Dr. Ranjit Chandra.

The assertions were made in the CBC-TV *The National* three-part series titled "The Secret Life of Ranjit Chandra" broadcast Jan. 30-Feb. 1, 2006.

Memorial University has always acted proactively in matters of research integrity. The university investigates or assists others in investigating such allegations and, where there is proof of fraud, the university takes immediate action.

The case of Dr. Chandra was no different. However, in this case, with Dr. Chandra's lack of co-operation, developing a body of evidence that would support a finding of fraud and warrant discipline proved to be extremely difficult, if not impossible.

In every instance where Dr. Chandra's research was called into question, Memorial University took immediate action. This information was made available to the CBC reporter, but was not used in the series, leading to an incomplete account of the matters relating to Dr. Chandra.

### **Memorial's record of investigation**

#### **1. The first allegation**

The first allegation arose in the early 1990s as a consequence of a concern expressed by a research associate of Dr. Chandra, Marilyn Harvey, a nurse who worked at the Janeway Hospital. The university took the following actions with these results:

- Memorial struck a two-person committee to undertake a preliminary enquiry. This committee was unable to secure the research data from Dr. Chandra. The committee concluded that there were grounds for a more-detailed investigation.
- Memorial struck a four-person committee that undertook the more detailed investigation, including hearing witnesses and accepting testimony concerning Dr. Chandra's research. This committee was also unable to secure Dr. Chandra's research data. The preliminary report of that committee was reviewed by lawyers for both Memorial University and Dr. Chandra. That review determined that the committee had committed a number of procedural errors, the consequence of which was that any report and any action taken as a result of a report would have been considered flawed and unsupportable.
- Memorial's three vice presidents (Academic, Administration, Research) then assumed the file and assigned a team of lawyers to undertake an effort to secure Dr. Chandra's research data. Dr. Chandra did not produce the data, claiming instead that the data had been stolen. He subsequently sued his research associate, claiming she had stolen the data, but ultimately dropped the lawsuit.
- The vice-presidents were unable to secure the data, and, as a consequence, were unable to verify research fraud conclusively. But they did take action. They required Dr. Chandra to sign an undertaking that would guide his future research, especially relating to the collection and preservation of research data. This undertaking subjected Dr. Chandra to more stringent requirements than any other researcher at the university.

#### **2. The second allegation**

The second allegation arose in 2001 when the British Medical Journal (BMJ) contacted Memorial University with concerns about research Dr. Chandra had submitted for publication.

Memorial University officials co-operated fully with the BMJ in an effort to determine the veracity of Dr. Chandra's research material.

- The BMJ first inquired about statistics in a table of data in Dr. Chandra's research. This could be verified without access to the raw research data. Memorial University officials clarified the matter.
- The BMJ then inquired about other data. University officials agreed to investigate on behalf of the BMJ but understood that this could only be achieved by reviewing Dr. Chandra's raw research data.

- University officials requested the research data from Dr. Chandra.
- Over a period of months and repeatedly Dr. Chandra avoided fulfilling this request.
- Finally, Dr. Chandra claimed that the research data has been lost by the university when his office had been moved and was therefore unavailable.
- Shortly after this, in 2002 Dr. Chandra resigned from the university.

### **Conclusion**

In every case where Dr. Chandra's research was called into question, Memorial University took action.

Despite its best efforts, the university was unable to make a case for research fraud, largely because the raw data on which a proper evaluation could be made had gone missing.

In both cases, Dr. Chandra blamed others for the loss of the data. In the first instance, he sued his research associate, claiming she had stolen it. In the second instance, he blamed Memorial University for losing it, despite no evidence to support the claim.

### **Memorial's research principles**

Memorial University values research integrity and understands that the reputation of a research institution is created and maintained largely by the manner in which the institution ensures the veracity of research findings.

In the 80-year history of Memorial University there have been very few cases of research fraud brought against researchers associated with Memorial University.

The record will show that in every one of those cases, including those involving Dr. Chandra, the university took firm action, to the maximum of its ability and given the varying circumstances.

As a result of these experiences and others at universities around the world, today there are more stringent regulations governing the practice of research at Memorial University. With very few exceptions, the researchers of Memorial University conduct their research in accordance with these standards and produce a wide range of knowledge of benefit to our society.

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