

HIV research fraudster handed stiff prison sentence

In the December 2014 issue of *Medical Writing*, I reported that disgraced Iowa State University researcher Dong-Pyou Han was facing fraud charges for faking experiments on a new HIV vaccine.¹ In spite of a guilty plea, on 1 July 2015 Dr Han was sentenced to 57 months in prison. He was also ordered to repay \$7.2 million to the NIH and faces probable deportation on his release.

In a poll on Nature.com, opinion was divided as to whether the punishment is fair.² It is rare for research fraud to result in a prosecution and so Han's sentence is exceptional. By way of comparison, infamous anaesthesiologist Scott Reuben was sentenced to a more modest 6 months in prison in 2010 for fabricating data and even patients in upward of 20 papers.

The involvement of Senator Charles Grassley, who first proposed the Sunshine Act, is thought by some to be a factor in the Han case coming to court. Although the impact of the sentence cannot be measured, it certainly sends out a clear message.

References

1. Gilliver S. AIDS researcher charged with fraud. *Med Writing*. 2014;23(4):279.
2. Reardon S. US vaccine researcher sentenced to prison for fraud. *News, Nature*; 2015 Jul 1 [cited 2015 Jul 14]. Available from: <http://www.nature.com/news/us-vaccine-researcher-sentenced-to-prison-for-fraud-1.17660>.

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