



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-21-0046-O

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We received an inquiry report from a small business (Business) regarding allegations of data fabrication or falsification by a former employee (Subject) of data published in a paper citing an NSF award. The paper also acknowledged a NIH grant. We reviewed the inquiry report, concurred with the Business that an investigation was warranted, and referred the matter to the Business for investigation. The Business also contacted NIH's Office of Research Integrity and the journal that published the paper. The journal issued an editorial expression of concern regarding the figures based on the questioned data.

The Business considered allegations of fabrication and falsification in three studies and concluded the Subject intentionally fabricated and falsified data in two of the three studies. We reviewed the investigation report and its attachments, the Subject's comments, and the Business's answers to several clarification questions. Based on the totality of evidence, we concluded the preponderance of evidence suggested a departure, but not a significant departure, from accepted practices of the research community. We concluded no further investigation was warranted.

We sent a Questionable Research Practices letter to the Subject, emphasizing the importance of accurately documenting research methods and that, even in preliminary experiments, data should never be misrepresented or inadequately recorded. We also sent a Questionable Administrative Practices letter to the Business, wherein we reiterated the importance of openly declaring any possible conflicts of interest and clearly disseminating and documenting data management plans and responsible conduct of research training to all employees working on NSF-funded research.

This case is closed with no further action taken.