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Penn Psychiatrist Accuses Five Colleagues of Plagiarism

by [Jocelyn Kaiser](#) on 13 July 2011, 4:50 PM | [4 Comments](#)

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A University of Pennsylvania researcher has accused five colleagues of scientific misconduct for allegedly allowing a drug company to put their names on a paper that they did not write. But although federal officials have said "ghostwriting" may be a form of plagiarism, which is prohibited, it's not clear that the Office of Research Integrity (ORI) would act on this particular case.

The spat involves a June 2001 [paper](#) in *The American Journal of Psychiatry* on a small clinical trial of the antidepressant Paxil that was funded by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and the National Institute of Mental Health. In a 8 July [letter](#) sent by his attorney to ORI, Penn psychiatrist Jay Amsterdam, a co-investigator on the study but not a co-author of the paper, accuses five colleagues of "allowing their names to be appended to a manuscript that was drafted by" Scientific Therapeutics Information (STI), a medical communications company, that had been "hired by" GSK (then SmithKline Beecham). The complaint also says that the widely cited paper "was biased" in favor of the drug's efficacy and safety and that Amsterdam felt that Penn colleague Laszlo Gyulai "misappropriated" his data.

ORI should investigate, the complaint says, because National Institutes of Health Director Francis Collins recently [wrote](#) that articles ghostwritten by NIH researchers "may be appropriate for consideration as a case of plagiarism." (ORI only investigates misconduct that took place within 6 years of an accusation, but it makes an [exception](#) if the accused scientists are still citing the paper; Gyulai cited it in 2007.)

The accused include Gyulai; Dwight Evans, chair of the Penn psychiatry department; and three researchers at other institutions. They include Charles Nemeroff, who in 2008 was found by Emory University to have failed to report drug company income; he is now chair of psychiatry at the [University of Miami](#).

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The complaint has been posted online by the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), a Washington, D.C., watchdog group. Its staff includes Paul Thacker, a [former staffer](#) for Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) who led an investigation alleging that Nemeroff and other psychiatrists hid millions of dollars in drug income from their institutions.

POGO [wrote](#) President Barack Obama Monday to complain that because Penn concluded that a separate ghostwriting accusation made by POGO against Evans last fall was [unfounded](#), Penn President Amy Gutmann should step down as chair of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues. "We do not understand how Dr. Gutmann can be a credible Chair of the Commission when she seems to ignore bioethical problems on her own campus," the letter says.

Penn said in a statement this week that it will investigate the new charges. In response to a request for comment from Gutmann, it referred to a statement from the Department of Health and Human Services. It says: "This issue involves faculty members of the medical schools at a number of universities and any specific questions about these individuals should be directed to their universities. The Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues provides a forum for public discourse and is a source of critical, independent advice for the government. The HHS

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Office of Research Integrity is reviewing this issue."

One of the five accused scientists, Gary Sachs of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, told *ScienceInsider* that he's "kind of mystified" by the allegations. He said he did not know STI was involved with the manuscript but that he came to Philadelphia to work on the first draft with Laszlo. He recalls discussing revisions of the paper with Nemeroff, the lead author, after it was submitted. He also notes that two co-authors were GSK employees. "Why would they ghostwrite it when they had two real authors?" he asks. (However, these two authors' affiliations were not stated in the paper.)

Nemeroff referred *ScienceInsider* to comments he made to *Nature* saying that while STI assisted the authors, "We wrote the paper." Another accused co-author, Charles Bowden of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center in San Antonio, did not respond to an e-mail.

It's not clear that ORI itself would investigate the complaint, says University of Michigan historian and former ORI consultant Nicholas Steneck. He points out that while ORI in a few cases has found misconduct involving plagiarism, the office leaves it to institutions to [handle authorship disputes](#). And differences of opinion are excluded from the federal [definition](#) of scientific misconduct.

"If the only charge is ghost authorship and the disagreement is seen as a scientific disagreement, then I would think it would be unlikely for them to take up the case," Steneck says.

Concerns about ghostwritten articles have led journals to [crack down](#) on the practice in the last few years. NIH's views on the matter have also evolved. Draft conflict of interest regulations [issued last summer](#) include "paid authorship" in a list of activities that NIH grantees must report to their institutions for review. The final rules are still not out; POGO [blames the holdup](#) on objections from institutions to a requirement that they publicly disclose their faculty' conflicts online.

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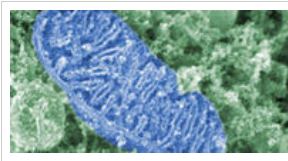
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Cheiron

Psychiatry is psychology masquerading as medicine, Psychology is religion masquerading as science, religion is superstition manipulating the fears of the ignorant.



Walter Doege, M.D.

very interesting but why psychiatry is a pseudoscience? Psychiatry is Medicine. Medicine is not oly science, is a science based practice and an art.

**Steve**

Lots of papers have names of people who did not have any part in writing the manuscript, performing the expts, or even in study design and hypothesis.

This is nothing new, and certainly not restricted to drug companies.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v>

With the finding that human pheromones run just about everything, psychiatry is going the way of the dodo. Everyone knew it was a pseudoscience. Throwing it on the wall to see what sticks isn't scientific or logical. See Nicholson, B. 1984; Does kissing aid human bonding by semiochemical addiction? *British Journal of Dermatology* 111(5):623-627.

Nicholson, B. 2011: Of Love 2nd Edition Textbook of medical science: exocrinology. <http://www.amazon.com/dp/14565...>

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