

XMRV paper withdrawn

Science retracts paper linking virus to chronic fatigue syndrome.

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The [controversial paper](#) that linked chronic fatigue syndrome to a virus has been withdrawn by *Science*.

"Multiple laboratories, including those of the original authors, have failed to reliably detect xenotropic murine leukemia virus-related virus (XMRV) or other murine leukemia virus (MLV)-related viruses in chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) patients," says the retraction notice. "In addition, there is evidence of poor quality control in a number of specific experiments in the Report."

Unusually, *Science* has decided to retract the paper without the full agreement of the authors. "We note that the majority of the authors have agreed in principle to retract the Report but they have been unable to agree on the wording of their statement. It is *Science's* opinion that a retraction signed by all the authors is unlikely to be forthcoming. We are therefore editorially retracting the Report."

The 2009 paper had already attracted an [editorial expression of concern](#) in May this year, noting that replicating the findings had proven difficult, and was [partially retracted](#) in September after contamination of some samples used was detected.

The full retraction is not unexpected, but will still be a blow to advocates of a link between the virus and CFS, notably Judy Mikovits (whom we profiled in March, see [Fighting for a cause](#)). Some scientists have been harshly critical of the original paper — and of the way that debate around the research has descended into a furious argument (see, for example, the *Nature* Editorial [Cause for concern](#))

Mikovits has since become embroiled in a legal case with her former employers, the Whittemore Peterson Institute for Neuro-Immune Disease in Reno, Nevada (see: [Embattled scientist in theft probe](#)). Other questions have also arisen over accusations she misrepresented data (see: [Integrity issue follows fired researcher](#)).

Jonathan Stoye, a retrovirologist at the National Institute for Medical Research in London, says it is "no surprise" that the paper has been retracted. "The writing's been on the wall for a time and the font's been getting larger," he says. "From the time the first contamination papers came out there were suggestions that was the explanation for everyone's inability to find the virus when they looked for it. I don't think it can be a surprise that they finally retracted it. Mistakes will happen and science does tend to be self-correcting. It has done that, and actually it's done that remarkably efficiently [in this case]."

Nature is seeking comment from Mikovits, several of her co-authors, and the Whittemore Peterson Institute.

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Probably not.