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## **Journal accuses UI researchers of misconduct**

TONY LEYS

REGISTER STAFF WRITER

A medical journal has cited “scientific misconduct” in retracting a paper written by University of Iowa physicians.

Editors of the Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine journal wrote a blistering, page-and-a-half editorial explaining why they were withdrawing the study, which was published last fall.

The study was written by Dr. Sebastian Schulz-Stubner, an assistant anesthesia professor, and two other doctors who worked at University Hospitals.

The journal editorial accused the team of several infractions. “An investigation by our editorial board determined that the authors had misrepresented the randomization process, inaccurately described how control groups were defined and misled readers about how the data were collected,” it said.

The editors said this was the first time in recent memory that they had retracted an entire paper. “This is the most serious scientific misconduct issue that the journal has faced in recent years, but it is by no means the only one.”

They likened the incident to other, high-profile cases of ethical problems, including the landmark stem-cell findings that were withdrawn by a South Korean scientist who admitted faking some of his results.

The study involved the use of a measuring method used in acupuncture to find the correct place to inject pain-killing medicine into a nerve in the leg. The method involves using the width of the patient's thumb, instead of a measuring instrument, to find the correct location.

University spokesman Steve Parrott said the university is reviewing the incident, but he didn't believe any action has been taken. He said the situation is unusual.

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## **Researcher's mistakes were unintentional, U of I says**

By TONY LEYS

Register Staff Writer

A University of Iowa administrator said Thursday that a medical researcher didn't intentionally misrepresent the way he performed a study that was published last year.

The administrator's conclusion was made public the day after news broke that Dr. Sebastian Schulz-Stubner had been accused of "scientific misconduct" by a medical journal.

Dr. Meredith Hay, the university's vice president for research, said in a prepared statement that Schulz-Stubner's actions had been investigated, and that they amounted to unintentional mistakes.

"It is our conclusion in this case that the principal investigator, a junior faculty member, had simply exhibited a basic lack of knowledge of research methodology and that it was this failure, rather than any intent to mislead or misrepresent, that led to the issue that has been raised," Hay wrote.

Schulz-Stubner, an assistant anesthesia professor, was criticized in an editorial in the journal *Regional Anesthesia and Pain Medicine*. The editorial, which ran in the July-August issue, was publicized Wednesday after an anonymous tipster notified Iowa reporters about it.

The editorial said the paper published last year by Schulz-Stubner and two colleagues misrepresented how their study was designed and conducted.

The study involved using the width of a patient's thumb to determine where to inject painkillers into a leg nerve.

The journal's editor-in-chief, Dr. Joseph Neal, said in an e-mail Thursday that the journal did not determine whether the authors' actions were intentional. He directed any other questions to the university.

Hay said in her statement that Schulz-Stubner would be required to attend a formal program on "responsible conduct of research," and that he have his research work overseen by a senior member of the university's anesthesia department.