

Conviction of disgraced SKorean scientist upheld

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South Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk leaves after his trial at the Seoul High Court in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, Dec. 16, 2010. An appellate court has upheld an earlier fraud conviction of the South Korean scientist disgraced in a cloning scandal that shook the international scientific community. (AP Photo/ Lee Jin-man)

(AP) -- An appeals court ruled Thursday to uphold most of the fraud convictions against a South Korean scientist disgraced in a cloning scandal that shook the international scientific community.

Hwang Woo-suk - who gained worldwide fame in 2004 with claims to have created the first cloned [human embryos](#) - was sentenced by a Seoul

district court in October to two years in prison on charges of embezzling \$800,000 in research funds and illegally buying human eggs. That sentence was suspended, allowing him to stay free if he were to break no laws for three years.

Both Hwang and prosecutors appealed the verdict.

The Seoul High Court upheld most of those convictions Thursday, but dismissed one involving an alleged \$100,000 in embezzled funds for lack of evidence, and reduced Hwang's sentence to 18 months in prison, suspended for two years.

Hwang made no comment during the packed courtroom proceedings.

Both Hwang and prosecutors have one week to appeal to the Supreme Court. Prosecutors had earlier demanded a four-year prison term for Hwang.

Hwang and his former colleagues at Seoul National University claimed in a paper published in the [journal Science](#) in 2004 that they had created the world's first cloned human embryos - and had extracted stem cells from them.

A year later, Hwang's team also claimed in the journal that they had created human [embryonic stem cells](#) genetically matched to specific patients, a purported breakthrough that promised a way to withstand rejection by a patient's [immune system](#).

But Hwang's reputation quickly eroded after questions about his claims led to an investigation by a university committee. It concluded that the 2005 paper was based on faked data, and also cast doubt on the previous findings. The journal, Science, retracted both papers.

Hwang eventually said the data was faked but claimed he had been deceived by a fellow researcher.

AP writer Hyung-jin Kim contributed to this report from Seoul.

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