

## Japan institute rejects 'phoney' research scientist appeal

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Haruko Obokata, a researcher of Japan's Riken Institute speaks at a press conference in Osaka, western Japan on April 9, 2014

A respected Japanese institute that sponsored stem cell research hailed as groundbreaking said Thursday the young scientist who wrote the paper should withdraw it, adding it stood by its conclusion that she fabricated data.

Haruko Obokata, 30, has insisted her findings were accurate, saying she had managed to create the building-block cells capable of growing into the [specialised cells](#) of the brain, liver, heart or kidneys.

She had urged her employer to reconsider its findings and exonerate her, but on Thursday the Riken Institute rejected that appeal in a move that may—in the worst case scenario—lead to a disciplinary discharge.

"The institute has decided not to review the conclusion and informed the person concerned of the decision as of today, while advising (her) to withdraw the paper," it said in a statement.

Obokata was feted as a modern-day Marie Curie after unveiling research that showed a simple way to re-programme adult cells to become a kind of stem cell.

So-called Stimulus-Triggered Acquisition of Pluripotency (STAP) [cells](#) were hailed as a breakthrough that could provide a ready supply of the base material for much-needed transplant tissue, at minimal cost.

But within weeks of her paper being published in the prestigious journal *Nature*, questions began to emerge, with fellow scientists saying they could not replicate her results.

It was later revealed by a Riken investigative panel that Obokata had cut-and-pasted illustrations used in other studies.

She accepted that the way she had presented the data was not right, but insisted it had been done for cosmetic reasons and not to alter the outcome, blaming her youth and inexperience for errors in her methodology.

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