

Virology Journal retracts paper on Jesus curing possible case of influenza

16 August 2010, by Lin Edwards

The *Virology Journal* published a paper on July 21 speculating that a woman said in the Bible to have been cured by Jesus had influenza. Now, the journal has retracted the paper and apologized for publishing it online.

Editor-in-Chief of the journal, Robert F. Garry, [publicly apologized](#) for publishing the article, saying it "clearly does not provide the type of robust supporting data required for a case report and does not meet the high standards expected of a peer-reviewed scientific journal." He also apologized for any "confusion or concern" the article may have created among readers.

Garry said the paper, entitled "[Influenza](#) or not influenza: Analysis of a case of high fever that happened 2000 years ago in Biblical time," was only intended to be an opinion piece and a "bit of relief from the 'normal' business of the journal," but the speculations in the paper did not belong in a peer-reviewed journal, and its contents did not represent the views of BioMed Central journals.

The retraction came after criticisms, including those made via blogs and a comment posted on the paper by Paul Gray of the Washington University School of Medicine, expressing the view that it was unclear how the paper met any of the normal standards of such a journal other than someone paid to have it published.

The paper was a "case study" of a woman described in the gospels of Mark (1:29 to 33), Luke (4:38-39), and Matthew (8:14-15). The woman was said to have had a high fever and was "cured by our Lord Jesus Christ." Among the reasons given for the conclusion the woman must have had influenza was that she was unlikely to have had a severe acute bacterial infection because such a disease would not be resolved instantaneously. The paper concluded that if their postulation is correct the case is one of the earliest descriptions of human influenza.

One of the blogs that brought the paper to notice was [This Scientific Life](#), by Bob O'Hara. O'Hara said the lead author of the paper, Kam L.E. Hon from the Department of Paediatrics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, had replied by email to his queries and confirmed he had agreed to the retraction and was "astonished" the article had produced such a negative response since it was only intended for thought provocation. He went on to apologize for the inconvenience caused to the Journal and anxiety caused to himself. He said he would never to write this kind of article again.

More information: [doi:10.1186/1743-422X-7-169](https://doi.org/10.1186/1743-422X-7-169)

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