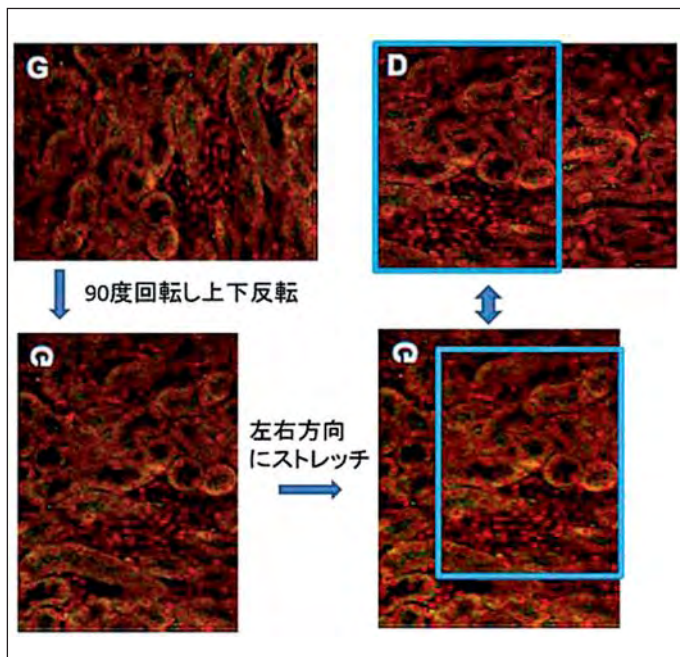
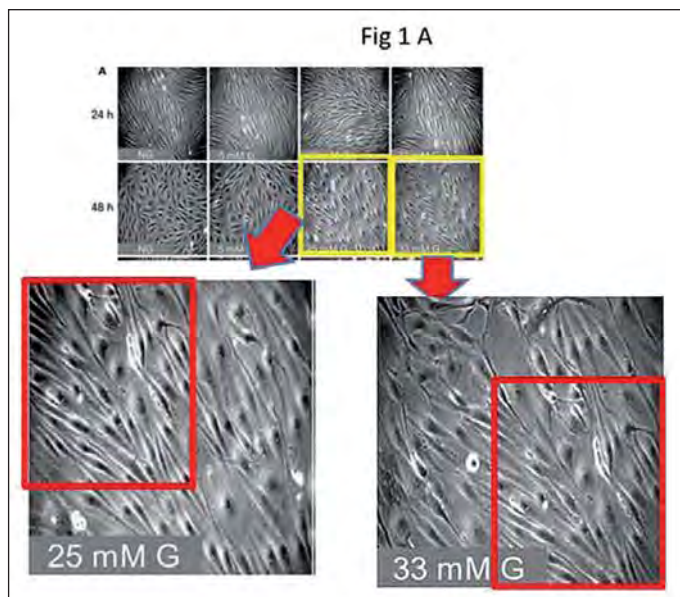


Photoshopping Papers...

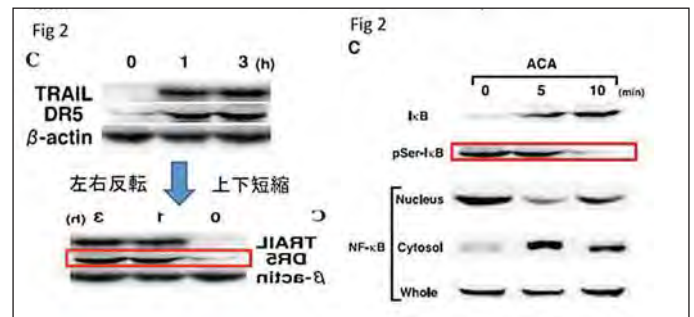
... One might easily be overcome with despair when looking at how many obviously manipulated paper illustrations the Japanese website 'Watch Doctors Blog' (<http://blog.m3.com/Retraction>) has dug out over the last couple of months. Almost each day, its authors track down dubious ploys like this one:



Even without knowing Japanese script, it is pretty clear how the authors doctored the figure, isn't it?
Or see example no. 2:



Also self-explanatory, this one speaks volumes.
Last but unfortunately not least, a likewise impressive example of how you can mask certain gel parts and re-use them for further publications in completely new contexts:



These are only three of the most irritating examples from the many entries over the last months. For those of you who would like to see more – and perhaps even more “elegant” – cases of unscrupulous figure photoshopping just go to the Japanese website and you will undoubtedly (and unfortunately) be well-served. Not knowing Japanese doesn't matter.

All three examples presented here are currently being investigated officially and by no means did they appear in any dubious or negligible journals. Rather, they have come from *Cancer Research*, *Journal of Immunology* and *Experimental Eye Research*. Further fresh examples covered at the Japanese website include papers from *Cell*, *Nature*, *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, *Nature Immunology*, and other “top notch” journals.

Given that no one can reliably say how much fraud is actually hidden in scientific literature, one has to be deeply worried by these revelations. Above all, it's the sheer boldness of the “authors” with which they cut, stretch, compress, rotate, re-assemble or however manipulate and re-use their “products” that can sometimes cause one's saliva to freeze.

Whoever, on the other hand, may now be feeling inspired by the above examples to try “photoshopping” some data themselves ought, at least, to be countered: Watch out! After all, there are some busy and clever Japanese out there, who might decide to take a very close look at your fingers.

And be assured – they're not the only ones!

