



26 January 2016

Dear KI professors,

I'm sure many of you have watched the series of documentaries currently broadcast by SVT revolving around the KI researcher Paolo Macchiarini, who was previously a guest professor at KI and chief physician at Karolinska University Hospital. The second part of the documentary, broadcast on Wednesday 20 January, reveals several pieces of information about surgeries and a clinical trial in Russia, the circumstances of which have been unknown to KI. It exhibits, as it is portrayed in the programme, actions which are unacceptable to KI and which we have strongly condemned both in the media and on our website.

The programme also gives the impression that I have confidence in Paolo Macchiarini's activities in Krasnodar. This is not the case. The comment I was shown to make in the programme was made at the press conference we held in connection with making a decision in the matter of misconduct. At that point, and at the time the TV-programme "Dokument inifrån" interviewed me on 21 December, I had no deeper knowledge about Macchiarini's surgeries in Russia. If I had been asked the question after having seen the programmes I would definitely not have answered the way I did.

I received information about the contents of the programme while I was visiting China but it was only on Saturday 23 January that I had the opportunity to see the programme myself. I felt great unease at what I saw. Many of you and our colleagues, not least those who have collaborated with Paolo Macchiarini, have also come to me and reacted with dismay in the way that is shown and expressed in the programme. But let me at the same time point out that at present we do not have a comprehensive picture of the activities in Krasnodar but only the slice of reality shown in the documentary.

In this letter I would like to account for the current situation and how I and the rest of the KI and the department's management will act, and I will try to provide you with an in-depth background.

In light of what has emerged in the two TV programmes, Dean of Research Hans-Gustaf Ljunggren and I will soon meet with Paolo Macchiarini to hear his side of the story.

An article in Vanity Fair claims that Macchiarini submitted false information in the CV he provided KI with before being employed as part-time guest professor in 2010. Human Resources have been tasked with examining this matter and we hope that the investigation will be concluded this week.

We will also investigate whether we have in any way fallen short in our supervision of Paolo Macchiarini's secondary occupation. His commission at Kuban State University (KSU) in Krasnodar, where the clinical trial has taken place, is a secondary employment which KI has previously approved and which is now being examined by KI's internal audit, but where important details have not been known to us until now. What we have primarily lacked knowledge of is on what indication the Russian patients have received the surgery. The three patients who received surgery at Karolinska University Hospital were, as you may be aware of, severely ill, and the surgery was performed on vital indication.

We do not allow secondary employment that may undermine confidence in KI, and considering the way that Macchiarini's activities in Russia are described in the programme, the secondary employment would not have been approved. At the same time we are looking into whether KI's secondary occupation reports need to be developed further in order to improve the possibility of assessing the potential danger of secondary employment undermining confidence.

Furthermore, we have previously instigated a collaboration with Karolinska University Hospital in order to review the distinction between health and medical care and research.

On the website for the research project that Macchiarini participated in at KSU, there are several instances where reference is made to KI in one way or another. In light of this, it is important to establish that there has never been any formalised collaboration between KI and KSU, neither at a unit or department level, nor at the university level. Nor are there any financial relations between KI and KSU. It is a case of a scientific collaboration at the doctoral level between individual research groups from both universities. This collaboration has, included study visits from Russian colleagues at Paolo Macchiarini's laboratory at KI.

In the second episode of “Dokument inifrån”, it was mentioned that “Karolinska in Stockholm had helped with the final selection [of patients to receive surgery in Russia]”. This is information that the documentary makers obtained from the Russian project's website. There are memoranda from an international video conference that took place in February 2012, attended by a number of employees of KI and Karolinska University Hospital. The Swedish participants have a completely different view. According to them, the purpose was to try to see if it was possible to meet over continents with the aid of video technology (in this case Russia, Sweden,

Italy and the USA). At this video conference, experiences from previous and current patient cases were shared, which is also the view that emerges when going through the memoranda from the meeting. The claim that patients would have been selected for transplantation in Russia in this context is something that the Swedish participants do not confirm. This was also the only video conference arranged as it was established that the current technology did not enable the displaying of x-ray images, for example.

The programme also cited information that the physicians at Karolinska University Hospital who reported Macchiarini for misconduct in research had been threatened with police reports and warnings for illegally accessing a patient's medical records. The questions were not handled by KI but within Karolinska University Hospital, which also filed a police report regarding the publishing of patients' medical records on the American website Retraction Watch. The report was not aimed at any individual person but rather the actions themselves. The police investigation was cancelled.

Paolo Macchiarini was employed as a part-time guest professor at KI in November 2010. The appointment was for three years and was extended in 2013 by another two years. It is not possible to be a guest professor longer than this, according to the Higher Education Ordinance. During the period 2010-2013 his employment was combined with part-time work at Karolinska University Hospital. Starting from 1 November 2015, Paolo Macchiarini has a fixed-term research position at KI. His research at KI encompasses laboratory research and research on animal models. He has been investigated and acquitted of misconduct in research (see below). The surgeries that he participated in at Karolinska University Hospital have been reported to the police and are being investigated by prosecutors.

The surgeries involving an artificial trachea, conducted on three patients at Karolinska University Hospital during 2011-2012, involved patients with serious medical conditions. The assessment of the physicians at the Karolinska University Hospital, as well as the physicians in charge of their treatment in their native countries, was that they had a very short time left to live. The surgeries were conducted as lifesaving medical care, where an experimental method was used as no other treatment methods were considered to be available.

On 24 June 2014 I, as Vice-Chancellor, received a report from four physicians at Karolinska University Hospital in which Paolo Macchiarini was suspected of misconduct in research. The report related to a scientific article describing the manufacturing of a synthetic oesophagus and the transplantation of this to a rat. In accordance with the rules in the Higher Education Ordinance, the university where

misconduct is suspected to have occurred shall investigate the suspicions. We initiated an investigation on 5 July.

Further reports came in at the end of August and in September. They referred to six articles that described transplantations on patients who had received synthetic tracheas lined with cells from their own bone marrow. Three were original works that reported new findings and three were overview articles that primarily sum up and comment on previously published data. The latter had been generated either within the group of authors or by other researchers. The reporters made a number of accusations against Paolo Macchiarini. The main part of their critique referred to the scientific articles – seven of them in total – containing erroneous accounts of research results and hence also incorrect conclusions.

I then sought at least one independent, external Swedish speaking expert with no ties to the researchers involved, who could take on the time-consuming task of examining whether the criticised articles could be considered expressions of misconduct in research. On 25 November 2014 I gave the commission, through a Vice-Chancellor's decision, to Bengt Gerdin, Professor Emeritus at Uppsala University. Gerdin submitted his conclusions on 13 May 2015, at which point he was of the opinion that all reported articles contained errors that constituted misconduct in research.

After Gerdin's statement, Paolo Macchiarini and the other co-authors involved were given the opportunity to make a statement regarding Gerdin's conclusions. The material submitted then formed, along with Gerdin's statement, the basis for mine and KI's decision in the matter of misconduct in research. The matter which I and colleagues who participated in the final administration of the matter had to consider was whether the articles presented facts correctly at the time of publishing. KI's investigation did not involve care or permission-related issues or healthcare ethics. On 28 August 2015 I made a decision that it was not a case of misconduct, but I criticised Macchiarini for carelessness and for the fact that sections from the publications did not live up to the high demands that KI and the scientific community place on quality.

Just before Christmas I received a letter from Bengt Gerdin in which he presented his opinions on the decision to acquit Paolo Macchiarini of misconduct in research. I have thoroughly reviewed this with colleagues in KI management and taken note of Gerdin's opinions, but find no new facts that warrant a re-opening of the investigation into misconduct in research.

Many people are involved and affected by this in various ways. I am still working on this with the rest of the KI management and the department's management, and we are doing everything we can to find the best solutions for all parties involved. And

again, the clinical trial in Krasnodar, as it is portrayed in the programme, is not consistent with KI's core values and is something which we strongly condemn.

Best regards,

Anders Hamsten