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December 14, 2021

Dr. Richard Horton  
Editor-in-Chief  
The Lancet  
230 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10169

Dear Dr. Horton:

I write to request information regarding the publication and subsequent retraction of a study published in *The Lancet* titled, “Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis” (“the study” or “the paper”).<sup>1</sup> This study, which first appeared in *The Lancet* on May 22, 2020, reportedly found that, “treating people who have [COVID-19] with chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine did not help and might have increased the risk of abnormal heart rhythms and death.”<sup>2</sup>

According to reports, following the study’s publication, scientists and clinicians raised concerns about the veracity of the data used in the study.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, experts questioned, “the astonishing number of patients involved and details about their demographics and prescribed dosing[.]”<sup>4</sup> The Surgisphere Corporation (“Surgisphere”), a Chicago-based company, supplied the dataset that served as the basis for the study.<sup>5</sup> Surgisphere’s owner and founder, Dr. Sapan Desai, was one of the authors of the study.

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<sup>1</sup> Mandeep Mehra, et al., *RETRACTED: Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis*, *The Lancet*, May 22, 2020, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31180-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31180-6/fulltext).

<sup>2</sup> Roni Caryn Rabin, *Scientists Question Validity of Major Hydroxychloroquine Study*, *NY Times*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/29/health/coronavirus-hydroxychloroquine.html>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Kelly Servick and Martin Enserink, *A mysterious company's coronavirus papers in top medical journals may be unraveling*, *Science*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.science.org/content/article/mysterious-company-s-coronavirus-papers-top-medical-journals-may-be-unraveling>.

<sup>5</sup> Mandeep Mehra, et al., *RETRACTED: Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis*, *The Lancet*, May 22, 2020, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31180-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31180-6/fulltext). A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* also used a dataset supplied by Surgisphere and was retracted. Mandeep Mehra, et al., *RETRACTED: Cardiovascular Disease, Drug Therapy, and Mortality in Covid-19*, *New England Journal of Medicine*, May 1, 2020, <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2007621>.

On June 3, 2020, *The Lancet* issued an “expression of concern” regarding the study after “serious scientific questions” were brought to the editors’ attention.<sup>6</sup> On June 5, 2020, the authors of the study, not including Dr. Desai, published a statement retracting their paper.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after the retraction, you reportedly called the study a “fabrication” and “a monumental fraud.”<sup>8</sup>

Although this fraudulent study was ultimately retracted, it is concerning and shameful that, in the midst of a pandemic, *The Lancet* published such a misleading paper on a potential early treatment for COVID-19. In order to better understand *The Lancet*’s actions regarding this study, I request the following:

1. The preservation of all records<sup>9</sup> referring or relating to the study titled, “Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis.”<sup>10</sup>
2. All documents and communications between and among employees or representatives of *The Lancet* and U.S. government employees referring or relating to the study.
3. All documents and communications between and among *The Lancet* employees or representatives who reviewed this study, including any comments, ratings, findings and recommendations of the peer reviewers.
4. All documents and communications between and among employees or representatives of *The Lancet* and individuals or organizations encouraging *The Lancet* to publish the study.
5. All documents and communications between and among employees or representatives of *The Lancet* and the study’s authors, or their representatives.
6. All documents and communications between and among employees or representatives of *The Lancet* and employees or representatives of Surgisphere.

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<sup>6</sup> The Lancet Editors, *Expression of concern: Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis*, *The Lancet*, June 3, 2020, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31290-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31290-3/fulltext).

<sup>7</sup> Mandeep Mehra, et al., *Retraction—Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis*, *The Lancet*, June 5, 2020, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31324-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31324-6/fulltext).

<sup>8</sup> Roni Caryn Rabin, *The Pandemic Claims New Victims: Prestigious Medical Journals*, *NY Times*, June 14, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/14/health/virus-journals.html>.

<sup>9</sup> “Records” include any written, recorded, or graphic material of any kind, including letters, memoranda, reports, notes, electronic data (emails, email attachments, and any other electronically-created or stored information), calendar entries, inter-office communications, meeting minutes, phone/voice mail or recordings/records of verbal communications, and drafts (whether or not they resulted in final documents).

<sup>10</sup> Mandeep Mehra, et al., *RETRACTED: Hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine with or without a macrolide for treatment of COVID-19: a multinational registry analysis*, *The Lancet*, May 22, 2020, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)31180-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)31180-6/fulltext).

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Please provide this information as soon as possible but no later than January 4, 2022.  
Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Ron Johnson  
Ranking Member  
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations