

Questionable Ethics Statement on Three Articles from Shandong Cancer Hospital and Institute

A same ethical approval number of SDTHEC2024004013 was found to be shared by three articles [1-3] from Shandong Cancer Hospital and Institute, an investigation by the 5GH Team reveals.

DOI	Authors	Title	Participant	Ethics
10.1186/s12885-025-15032-9	Yunhao Chen Yang Zhang Xiaowen Wang Yafang Hong Xia He Zihan Zhou Xingchen Ding	Assessment of radiation dermatitis in locally advanced head and neck cancer patients treated with concurrent chemoradiotherapy using LENT-SOMA scale: hematological indicators-based nomogram model	HNC patients with intensity-modulated radiotherapy (IMRT), were recruited from Shandong cancer hospital from May 24, 2020 to December 13, 2023.	The protocol of this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Shandong Cancer Hospital and Institute (approval number SDTHEC2024004013)
10.1186/s12957-024-03490-7	Zihan Zhou Junjian Lin Ying Wang Yunhao Chen Yang Zhang Xingchen Ding Benhua Xu	Acute radiation skin injury in stage III-IV head and neck cancer: scale correlates and predictive model	During the period from May 24, 2020 to December 31, 2023, stage III-IV head and neck cancer patients receiving intensity-modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) were enrolled consecutively from Shandong Cancer Hospital.	The protocol of this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Shandong Cancer Hospital and Institute (approval number SDTHEC2024004013)
10.1186/s12944-025-02553-2	Yafang Hong Hongdan Guan Yunhao Chen Yao Wang Junjian Lin Ying Wang Yang Zhang Rong Zheng Xingchen Ding Zihan Zhou Benhua Xu	Radiation induced dermatitis by increasing triglyceride levels to induce autophagy and inhibit the PI3K/Akt/mTOR signaling pathway	Radiation induced dermatitis by increasing triglyceride levels to induce autophagy and inhibit the PI3K/Akt/mTOR signaling pathway	The Institutional Review Board of Shandong Cancer Hospital and Institute approved the study protocol. All participants provided informed consent. The local animal care committee approved the animal experiments (approval number SDTHEC2024004013)

Two of those three articles [1-2] are about effect of radiation therapy in human participants, while the third one [3] reports both treatment on human and study on animals. As the ethical committee is currently on the the New Year leave, the Team has not received an immediate comment from the hospital regarding whether the ethical approval was granted for a human study or a animal study.

The Team also notes that the ethical approval was obtained after the participant recruitment in the two studies [1-2], suggesting that the ethical approval was not granted to a biobank/database. On the other hand, the date of the participant recruitment ended at different days, implying that distinct cohorts of participants were involved in the studies [1-2]. Therefore, the use of the same ethical approval number across studies [1-2] is questionable.

A colleague, John Loadman, raised a concern that tortured phrase of "knot hoof tissue disease" was found on articles from Chinese authors, and this led the Team to a further investigation and uncovered the questionable ethical statement on these articles.

[1] 10.1186/s12885-025-15032-9

[2] 10.1186/s12957-024-03490-7

[3] 10.1186/s12944-025-02553-2

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