

Geneticist withdraws paper after doubts

A Chinese geneticist is to retract a paper on a new gene editing technology that was published last year after other scientists said they had been unable to reproduce his results.

Han Chunyu and his co-authors applied for retraction of the paper from the May 2, 2016 edition of Nature Biotechnology and said they would like to analyze why the results were not reproduced, according to a brief statement on the website of Hebei University of Science and Technology.

Han's team agreed to have a third-party laboratory carry out an experiment to verify the findings on NgAgo-gDNA, said the statement.

NgAgo-gDNA is a new genome editing technology that could be an alternative to the mainstream CRISPR/Cas9 technique.

With China currently in eager pursuit of heavyweight scientific achievements, Han became an overnight sensation.

He was widely praised for pursuing groundbreaking research at a university with very little standing in the field of genetic sciences.

But doubts immediately emerged, with other researchers saying that the results could not be replicated. They included Dr Gaetan Burgio of the Australian National University.

"A third-party laboratory will perform the experiment with the support of fellow scientists and disclose the results in response to public concerns," said the statement.