



## Description

*Image credits: Mathieu Thouvenin from Flickr*

There is a bizarre case of alleged scientific misconduct happening at the Harvard Medical School. This Harvard dispute involves Prof. Lee Rubin, a stem cell researcher and Gustavo German, a PhD student in Rubin's lab. German alleged that Prof. Rubin was aware of the fabricated research data but did nothing to correct it. German contends that Rubin knew he was the whistleblower and has been retaliating. The matter has resulted in a restraining order issued against the professor. Rubin has been fighting the order, saying it makes it hard to follow the regulations of the federal funds he has received that requires him to supervise his students' research.

## Restraining Order Against a Prominent Scientist

In June 2015, Gustavo German became aware that data in one of Rubin's papers were allegedly fabricated. As a member of the scientific community, German was aware of the ethical need to not publish fraudulent data. On March 10, 2016, German sent an email to Drew Faust (President of Harvard) giving details of the potential misconduct.

After Rubin became aware of German's allegation of scientific misconduct, the academic relationship between the stem cell researcher and his PhD student deteriorated. German says Rubin started a campaign of retaliation against him. Prof. Rubin had been concerned about German, stating that he was sometimes "uncharacteristically disheveled and exhausted". Other members of Rubin's lab said they felt unsafe around him. One even stated that she felt he was distorting her research images.

As the investigations continued, things got tense between German and Rubin. German stopped going to Rubin's lab in May 2016. On June 3, 2016, Rubin told Harvard officials that he thought German might be working in the lab at night. Things got even worse when Rubin suggested that Harvard officials seek mental health advice. Rubin spoke to a clinician at Harvard's Health Services. On June 4, 2016, Harvard intervened and at 0100h, the police came to German's house to take him for a [forced psychiatric evaluation](#).

## The Court Battle Continues

The Harvard whistleblower does not believe Rubin acted out of concern for his mental health. He is now at the center of an extraordinary court battle at Harvard. Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Fahey has agreed with German. She issued a restraining order and gave instructions that German should be given access to the resources he needs to finish his PhD. However, Rubin (and Harvard) have challenged this ruling.

Since the initial ruling, Harvard has withdrawn German from the Harvard Medical School. As an Argentinian on a student visa, he feared that this would force him to leave the country. Judge Fahey [issued a revised order](#) on July 7 requiring Harvard to reinstate German, remove security guards from Rubin's lab at Harvard, and allow him to finish his research. As of July 27, Harvard has not complied with the ruling. Rubin is still appealing the court order as the restraining order against the prominent scientist remains in effect. What will happen next in this Harvard dispute around scientific misconduct is anyone's guess.

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