

Newsmakers

BLURRED IMAGE. A U.S. journal and an Indian panel have lined up on opposite sides in a case of alleged plagiarism involving a young Indian researcher whose degree hangs in the balance.

Early last year, an anonymous e-mail claimed that a 2005 paper in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry (JBC)* co-authored by Hema Rangaswami, then a Ph.D. student at the National Centre for Cell Science in Pune, India, contained images that appeared in an earlier *JBC* paper by the same authors. Last month, *JBC* withdrew the paper. Shelagh Ferguson-Miller, chair of *JBC*'s publications committee, says a computer-assisted analysis found that two control blots were identical to images that had been labeled differently in a 2004 publication. "To us, it seemed there had been deliberate misrepresentation," she says. The paper examines signaling pathways involved in the development of skin cancer.



CREDIT: SOURCE: HEMA RANGASWAMI

Five months before the retraction, however, a scientific panel set up by the Indian government to investigate the charge found no evidence of image duplication or misconduct. Govindarajan Padmanabhan, a biologist at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, who headed the Indian panel, says the panelists grilled the researchers and examined original data.

Rangaswami received a provisional degree last year and now works as a postdoc at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Her supervisor, UCSD cancer biologist Renate Pilz, says she has reviewed Rangaswami's work and believes the *JBC* paper is valid. Right now, Rangaswami has more on her mind besides completing her defense: This month, she gave birth to her first child.