Statement of Concern: “Both epithelial cells and mesenchymal stem cell-derived chondrocytes contribute to the survival of tissue-engineered airway transplants in pigs”

Editorial Expression of Concern: The Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery (Journal) was notified of concerns regarding a study involving 30 pigs that was approved by the Animal Care and Use Committee and the Bioethics Committee of the University of Barcelona. The Journal wishes to publicly share the concerns raised so readers can consider the concerns themselves. The Journal tried to contact the active authors for additional information on the study; however, the authors were not responsive to our requests.

In the article, the authors describe the pig study as being undertaken before another study reporting a case of a tracheal graft implantation in a human subject published by The Lancet in 2008 (https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)61598-6). In October 2023, The Lancet retracted the mentioned article (https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(23)02341-3) as well as the 5-year follow-up article (https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(13)62033-4).

In addition, concerns regarding Figure 4 have been raised that question whether the bioengineered tracheas presented by the authors are bioengineered matrices. Figure 4 allegedly presents cross-sections of the stated bioengineered matrices rather than longitudinal sections crossing the anastomoses with the native trachea.

The Journal has sought guidance from and discussed these concerns with the Committee on Publication Ethics. After those communications and additional consideration by the editors, the Journal has decided to publish this Expression of Concern regarding this article.