

# Elisabeth Bik : " There is no protection for science misconduct whistleblowers "

Elisabeth Bik is a Dutch/US microbiologist specializing in scientific integrity. She excels in detecting image manipulation in scientific publications. To date, she has identified and reported more than 4,000 scientific papers with duplicated images or other concerns, such as plagiarism, breaches of ethical approval, or conflicts of interest.

She is also the founder of [Microbiome Digest](#) and the [Science Integrity Digest](#) blogs.

In March 2020, she revealed study flaws, ethical concerns, and conflicts of interest in a paper published in the International Journal of Antimicrobial Agent by the group of Professor Didier Raoult. He qualified her "crazy" at the French Senate during an audition

In March 2021, she also revealed a series of problems in figures and additional concerns in ethical approval protocols in dozens of other Didier Raoult's publications. Today, she is the subject of a complaint for bullying and attempted blackmail.

## Interview

### 1. Elisabeth, how did you learn you were the subject of a complaint ?

*On Thursday April 29, Didier Raoult posted a video on YouTube in which he said he filed a complaint against me that day for acts of harassment and defamation. The next day, April 30, Eric Chabriere, a professor who works at the same institution as Raoult, posted a screenshot of the complaint. It was addressed to the Procureur de la Republique, and it was filed against Boris Barbour, and me, for acts of harassment, blackmail, extortion, and providing the infrastructure for these infractions.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSwEgQHec8U> (at 14 min 10 sec)

<https://twitter.com/EChabriere/status/1388120080957968391>

### 2. What follow-up will you give to this complaint ?

*I am still getting legal advice. It is not sure if the complaint has actually been filed; all I have seen is Raoult's statement and Chabriere's screenshot. It is also not sure if the Procureur will act upon the complaint.*

### 3. Today, is that risky to denounce mistakes or fakes coming from revues or others scientists ?

*Yes, as you can see from the events that happened to me. There is no protection for science misconduct whistleblowers. Many people have left academia after trying to raise integrity concerns, and being retaliated against.*

#### **4. Have you ever hesitated to publish a scientific paper ?**

*Yes, I always ask myself if I am sure about the concerns I have, and if I am not sure, I will not post it. I try to remain polite and open for the possibility that there is a perceived but not an actual concern. Authors are always welcome to take away concerns by showing proof that e.g. the images are not duplicated or that the ethical approval had indeed been received before the start of the experiment, but very few authors do so.*

#### **5. More and more people seem to disagree on how the health crisis is handled. Does science polarize debates?**

*We certainly live in a very polarized time. There is a lot of attention in the media for some people with fringe opinions that are not based on facts. Most scientists, however, agree in large lines with each other. Unfortunately, media reporting appears to give equal weight to scientists' views and those of self-proclaimed experts with little data to show.*

Interview for [factandfurious.com](https://factandfurious.com)

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