

## So science might have gotten it wrong... Now what?

*The following is an edited excerpt.*

This week I learned about an unfolding scientific debate that's got me thinking about the challenge — the impossibility? — of swift and sure scientific correction. What does it mean when one group of researchers, or even two or three groups, can't replicate a particular scientific finding? Does that necessarily mean it's wrong? At what point should a scientist give up on a new idea for lack of supporting evidence?

That unfolding debate started in late 2011, when Chen-Yu Zhang's team from Nanjing University in China found something pretty wild: bits of rice RNA floating in the bloodstreams of Chinese men and women. That might not seem so strange; rice was a primary ingredient of their diets, after all. But RNA molecules are pretty fragile. So the discovery shocked and intrigued many biologists.

So the paper made its media splash. And in the 21 months since its publication, the work has been cited in 42 other papers, according to Web of Knowledge.

But less than two years after the original paper came out, at least five studies have followed it up. And in my (utterly non-expert) judgment, it seems like none of them meaningfully replicate Zhang's paper. (Zhang has not responded to my request for comment; I will update the post if/when he does.)

**Read the full post here: [So Science... Might Have Gotten It Wrong. Now What?](#)**