

Statement issued by RIKEN

March 24, 2026

**Results of Verification Committee Investigation
on a Media Report by Bungeishunju Ltd. Regarding RIKEN**

On February 4, 2026, a media outlet published an article concerning the relationship between RIKEN's President, Makoto Gonokami, and the Japan Cosmetic Association. On the same day, RIKEN [responded via our official website](#), sharing the facts of the incident as well as RIKEN's position on the incident. Considering the weight of our social responsibility as a public research institution, RIKEN decided to enact measures to allow us to take accountability with transparency. On February 4, RIKEN established an independent verification committee composed of three members: Chairman Yasuro Tanaka and Committee Members Toshiaki Hiwatari and Tokuji Izumi. The committee conducted an intensive and thorough investigation of this matter over the span of approximately one month. On March 23, RIKEN received a compiled report from the committee (below, referred to as the "verification report").

According to the committee's findings, regarding whether the incident constituted a "prohibited act" as set forth in the *Ethics Regulations for RIKEN Employees*, the verification report states the following: "President Gonokami's participation in the 'lab visit with practical demonstration' in question does not constitute a violation of the *Ethics Regulations for RIKEN Employees*, as it does not qualify as a prohibited act of receiving services free of charge from, or at the expense of, a party with a conflict of interest, or accepting a form of entertainment or hospitality from such a party."

Regarding the nature of President Gonokami's participation in the "lab visit with practical demonstration" and its connection to joint research, the verification report states: "There is no evidence to suggest that President Gonokami's participation in the 'lab visit with practical demonstration' without payment constituted a benefit received as improper remuneration, nor that it led to joint research between RIKEN and any of the following parties: Dr. Ayumi Yoshizaki, the Clinical Cannabinoid Research Social Cooperation Program, the Japan Cosmetic Association, or the Department of Dermatology at the Graduate School of Medicine and the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Tokyo."

We view these points as an objective verification, from the perspective of an external third party, of RIKEN's position from the statement on February 4, which reads:

“RIKEN does not see this matter as an issue compromising the fairness of the institute’s decision-making.”

After receiving a questionnaire from the media outlet on February 2, RIKEN cooperated sincerely, submitting a written response in good faith by the deadline of noon on February 3—a deadline which was set unilaterally by the outlet.

The verification report confirms that in this response, RIKEN indicated the following: “It is a fact that on Saturday, September 7, 2024, Dr. Gonokami and his wife, Mrs. Gonokami, visited the University of Tokyo Hospital. Dr. Ayumi Yoshizaki and Mrs. Gonokami were acquainted through the course of a past treatment at the University of Tokyo Hospital. The background of this visit was that Dr. Yoshizaki invited Mrs. Gonokami via email to participate in a ‘experiencing the course during a lab visit.’ Dr. Gonokami visited the hospital with the understanding that the ‘experiencing the course during a lab visit’ was an introduction to research activities at the University of Tokyo Hospital. He understood that, as part of the treatment experience, he received a single demonstration of the procedure.” However, the article presents these facts using expressions such as “the background and other circumstances surrounding the hospitality.” The verification report states: “In addition to the writing style giving readers the impression that President Gonokami received ‘hospitality’ for improper purposes, the article intentionally summarizes RIKEN’s response as ‘while acknowledging that he received beauty treatments,’ and therefore the content of the article is misleading and inappropriate.” The verification report further states: “Much of the content of the article in question consists of false and unjustified claims, as well as exaggerations that, while not necessarily false, are misleading and inappropriate. Therefore, the distribution or public transmission of the article in question by Bungeishunju Ltd. is unjustified, and damages the social reputation of RIKEN and President Gonokami.”

Based on the committee’s findings, it is RIKEN’s position that it was highly inappropriate to widely publicize an article containing content that cannot be interpreted as anything other than the intentional manipulation of public perception. Furthermore, it is clear that this action caused serious disruption to RIKEN’s core operations, including this verification process itself, which is highly regrettable.

The importance of media organizations as public institutions goes without saying. The verification report states: “While media organizations play an extremely important role in fulfilling the public’s right to know, they also wield significant social influence; therefore, they are required to maintain a fair and neutral stance at all times and to conduct rigorous fact-checking when reporting. The media organization in question must take its responsibilities seriously as a public institution in our society.”

RIKEN deeply respects the social significance of media organizations and will continue to respond sincerely to requests for interviews and other inquiries. We earnestly urge media organizations to fulfill their important role of offering appropriate reporting based on rigorous fact-checking and a fair and neutral stance.

As a national research and development organization, and in response to the trust placed in us by the public, RIKEN must ensure the greatest possible results from our research and development efforts in order to contribute to the sound development of the national economy and other public interests through the advancement of science and technology. We reaffirm that RIKEN's activities are founded on the trust of society, and we will continue to conduct our activities fairly and in accordance with ethical standards.