

To Chair of the TTS 2018 Scientific Program Committee, Congress Chair, and Committee Members:

We are a group of legal professionals, academics, ethicists, medical professionals and researchers with an interest in advancing knowledge about China's system of organ procurement and transplantation and promoting ethical medical practices in China.

We are extremely concerned to note that Dr. Zheng Shusen is participating in TTS 2018, scheduled to speak on July 2 in a plenary session. (<https://tts.guide/webapp/lecture/15>) This will be the second time Zheng has appeared at a TTS conference. His first appearance in 2016 occasioned widespread controversy. Below we set out a series of facts about Dr Zheng in support of our urgent request that he be precluded from the conference on the grounds of multiple, serious and prolonged breaches of international ethical standards regarding organ transplantation.

About Dr. Zheng Shusen

1. Zheng Shusen is one of the most prominent and prolific transplant surgeons in China. His titles include:
 - a. Academician in the Chinese Academy of Engineering
 - b. President of the Zhejiang Medical University's First Affiliated Hospital, where he is also the chief surgeon specializing in liver transplantation
 - c. Founding director of the Zhejiang Medical University's First Affiliated Hospital's multi-organ transplant center, affiliated with the Ministry of Health
 - d. Former president of the Chinese Society of Transplantation
 - e. Vice president of the China Medical Association
 - f. Editor-in-chief of the Chinese Journal of Organ Transplantation, the field's premier national publication
 - g. Chairman of the Zhejiang Anti-Cult Association (an anti-Falun Gong agency)
2. In these roles, Zheng has personally performed thousands of transplants during a period when very few, if any, cadaver organs were sourced from voluntary, non-

prisoner donors. This will be addressed below.

Dr. Zheng's presentation of a paper using prisoner data at TTS 2016

3. On the first day of TTS 2016 in Hong Kong — on August 18, 2016 — Zheng gave a presentation to a closed session titled “A New Era of Liver Transplantation in China.”
4. During this presentation, he delivered a paper that violated TTS rules by including research on organs from executed prisoners.¹
5. In response to this, Dr. Jeremy Chapman, then Chair of the Scientific Program Committee, said “Someone who presented here today presented research that included data from executed prisoners. We will report him to the Chinese government; he will never present at a TTS conference again. The TTS is serious about this,” according to a contemporaneous account told to a journalist by two attendees.²

Dr. Zheng's written falsehoods to the editor of *Liver International* and subsequent retraction

7. In October 2016, *Liver International* published a paper, co-authored by 17 Chinese transplant doctors, about fatty liver transplants at the Zhejiang University School of Medicine's First Affiliated Hospital. The authors claimed that of the 564 liver transplants performed at the hospital between April 2010 and October 2014, all were voluntary — i.e. none were from prisoners.³
8. This claim was challenged by Prof Wendy Rogers, Prof Maria Fiatarone Singh and Prof Jacob Lavee, who showed that China's pilot program only began in 2010, and that the claim that 564 liver transplants at the hospital were all from voluntary deceased donors contradicted numerous other official pronouncements.⁴
9. The corresponding authors — Zheng Shusen, a leading liver transplant surgeon and

¹ Tatlow, Didi Kirsten. 2016. “Chinese Claim That World Accepts Its Organ Transplant System Is Rebutted.” *The New York Times*, August 19, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/20/world/asia/china-hong-kong-organ-transplants.html>.

² Robertson, Matthew. 2016. “Acrimony Mars Transplant Conference in Hong Kong.” *The Epoch Times*. August 20, 2016. https://www.theepochtimes.com/acrimony-mars-transplant-conference-in-hong-kong_2142209.html.

³ Yu Z, Sun Z, Yu S, et al. Safety limitations of fatty liver transplantation can be extended to 40%: experience of a single centre in China. *Liver Int.* 2016; doi: 10.1111/liv.13244.

⁴ Rogers W, Fiatarone Singh MA, Lavee J. Papers based on data concerning organs from executed prisoners should not be published. *Liver Int.* 2017;37:769

president of the hospital where the liver transplants took place, and his colleague Yan Sheng — issued a rebuttal to these arguments.⁵

10. Rogers et. al made a response showing that Zheng and Yan relied on misleading references and unsubstantiated assertions that undermined their own claims.⁶
11. This response led to the retraction of the paper and a lifetime embargo of the authors from publication in *Liver International*. After their paper was retracted, the authors refused *Liver International* the right to publish their response to the initial complaint; the journal’s editors instead offered a summary.⁷
12. Later, Huang Jiefu was quoted in state-affiliated media reprimanding Zheng for “falsifying data.” Huang said that the First Affiliated Hospital had only procured livers from 166 voluntary donors during the period in question, not 564 as claimed. Zheng in turn blamed the episode — which he had defended in written correspondence — on a junior colleague. Huang’s statement indicates that Zheng Shusen and 16 colleagues falsely classified 398 nonvoluntary donors as voluntary.⁸
13. In this incident, Huang Jiefu’s spoken account to a Chinese media organization flatly contradicts Zheng’s written account to the editors of *Liver International*. In any case, Zheng is on record lying to the journal and being banned from publishing in it again.

Dr. Zheng’s unethical organ transplantation activities

15. Zheng Shusen is an architect of China’s unethical organ transplantation system. As one of China’s most well-known and prolific transplant surgeons, and the director of the transplant department of a major hospital, he has personally led at least 2000 liver transplants (the majority from nonvoluntary donors).⁹
16. In 2005 Zheng authored a paper documenting the performance of 46 ‘emergency’ liver

⁵ Publisher’s Note. *Liver Int.* 2017;37:770; doi: 10.1111/liv.13445.

⁶ Rogers W, Fiatarone Singh MA, Lavee J. Papers based on data concerning organs from executed prisoners should not be published: Response to Zheng and Yan. *Liver Int.* 2017;37:771–772. doi: 10.1111/liv.13366.

⁷ Mondelli M, Younossi Z, Negro F. Editor’s Note. *Liver Int.* 2017;37:768. doi: 10.1111/liv.13400.

⁸ Wang YY. 黄□夫□院士因器官来源被撤稿: □事求是, 依法推□移植事□. [Huang Jiefu discusses the retraction due to organ sourcing: seek truth from facts, promote the enterprise of transplantation in accordance with the law]. *The Paper*. 2017 Feb 12. Chinese. Available: <https://archive.is/QKQxf>

⁹ Hospital Introduction [Internet]. Zhejiang, Hangzhou (China): The First Affiliated Hospital, Zhejiang University; 2016 July? [cited 2017 Oct 5]. Chinese. Available: <https://archive.is/b7WlS>

transplants, from January 2000 to December 2004.¹⁰ This means that the patients received their new livers within 1-3 days of arriving at the hospital, typically with acute liver failure.

17. On January 28, 2005, Zheng and his surgical group performed 5 liver transplants in a single day and a total of 11 liver transplants that week.¹¹
18. The performance of these surgeries is significant, because China had no voluntary donor system at the time, and death row prisoners must, according to Chinese law, be executed within seven days. Given the implausibility of 46 remarkable coincidences over these four years, where a healthy criminal prisoner just happened to have their death sentence approved soon before the patient experienced liver failure — moreover, the prisoner had a similar body weight and compatible blood type to the patient — such transplants suggest that non-death row captive individuals were killed extrajudicially and on demand for their organs.
19. Given Zheng’s affiliations described below, this scenario may have particular explanatory power.

Dr. Zheng’s direct involvement in the anti-Falun Gong campaign

20. According to numerous official Communist Party publications, Zheng has since at least 2007 presided as chairman of the Zhejiang Anti-Cult Association.
21. The Zhejiang Anti-Cult Association is the provincial branch of the national agency, known as the China Anti-Cult Association (CACA), established in 2000 to create the propaganda, and devise methods of forcible ideological conversion, against practitioners of the Falun Gong spiritual discipline.¹²
22. In October 2010 Zheng presided over an “anti-cult” summer cadre training program

¹⁰ Zheng Shusen, “Analyzing the Results of 46 Emergency Transplants for Benign End-Stage Liver Disease” [急□肝移植救治良性□末期肝病46例□□分析], Third International Chinese Liver Failure and Artificial Liver Academic Meeting Compilation, [第三□国□□全国肝衰竭与人工肝学□会□□文集] March 1, 2005

¹¹ Academician Zheng Shusen Completes Five Liver Surgeries Successively in the Same Day [□□森院士同日□□完成5例肝移植手□] May 15, 2005

<http://transplantation.org.cn/ZheJiangDaXueFuShuDiYiYiYuanKuaiXun/2005-05/161.htm>

¹² Bryan Edelman and James T. Richardson. "Imposed Limitations on Freedom of Religion in China and the Margin of Appreciation Doctrine: A Legal Analysis of the Crackdown on the Falun Gong and Other "Evil Cults"" *Journal of Church and State* 47.2 (2005): 243-67.

held at the Zhejiang University of Water Resources and Electric Power. In his opening address to the program, he affirmed the results of the school's anti-cult work and "rated it very highly." (*"Anti-cult work" in this context refers to propaganda, demonization, and incitement to hatred against the Falun Gong religion and those who practice/believe it.*) In addition, speeches were given by members of the Zhejiang 610 Office, the extra-legal Communist Party task force established to oversee and implement the campaign of physical violence against Falun Gong.¹³

23. Chinese Anti-Cult Associations work closely with 610 branches to implement the campaign against Falun Gong. CACA furnishes the propaganda and creates an environment of discrimination, bias, mistrust, and hatred. 610 office staff perform the actual work of detention and torture, known as "transformation work" aimed at ideological conversion, and work with labor camp staff to devise more effective methods of ideological conversion.¹⁴
24. Anti-Cult Associations are also responsible for the training programs of cadres who engage in this forced ideological conversion work, and CACA agents design the curricula — textbooks, defamatory videos, etc. — used to brainwash these, often extralegally or illegally detained, prisoners.¹⁵
25. Zheng was head of the editorial committee responsible for the book "Prevention of Cults in the New Era – Selected Research Papers," which is devoted to vilifying Falun Gong.¹⁶
26. Zheng writes in the preface to the book: "‘Falun Gong’ and similar evil religions are like viruses corroding the organism of humanity, warping the souls of believers, destroying social order, disrupting economic development, and have become a public nuisance to mankind and a cancer on society."

¹³ Sarah Cook and Leeshai Lemish, "The 610 Office: Policing the Chinese Spirit," September 16, 2011. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-610-office-policing-the-chinese-spirit/>

¹⁴ Tianjian Net, "Excerpts from Jilin Provincial Anti-Cult Association: Anti-Cult Work Summary," [《天□网》摘自吉林省反邪教□会□《反邪教工作□□》] November 1, 2001. <http://www.tianjian.org/beizhib/bfulu.htm> [Link deleted, but archive preserved]

¹⁵ Capital Tech Network, "2002 Annual Scientific Association Excellence in Research Award," [2002年度科□系□□秀□研成果□] December 8, 2003.

<http://www.bast.net.cn/wsbg/bzjl/2003/12/8/12968.shtml> [Link deleted, but archive preserved]

¹⁶ "Prevention of Cults in the New Era – Selected Research Papers," [《新□期邪教防治研究学□□文精□》] Zhejiang Province Anti-Cult Association (Internal Circulation), 2009

In sum, Zheng Shusen is a surgeon who has: violated TTS rules on presenting data from executed prisoners; personally performed thousands of unethical organ transplantations certainly sourced from prisoners, and very likely from prisoners of conscience; committed academic fraud and made false statements to the editor of *Liver International*, resulting in a retraction and lifetime ban from the journal; and for over a decade been directly involved in an extralegal security campaign against a minority religious population, widely suspected to be the source of organs fuelling China's transplantation industry.

We call on the TTS 2018 Organising Committee to urgently withdraw Zheng's invitation to speak at TTS 2018 and to formally ban him from all TTS events in future. His presence at TTS makes a mockery of international ethical standards in organ transplantation and undermines efforts to support ethical transplant practices in China.

Yours sincerely,

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