

Scientific Characters

Rhetoric, Politics, and Trust in Breast Cancer Research

Lisa Keränen

Scientific Characters chronicles the contests over character, knowledge, trust, and truth in a politically charged scientific controversy that erupted after a 1994 *Chicago Tribune* headline: "Fraud in Breast Cancer Research: Doctor Lied on Data for Decade." In the aftermath of this dramatic news, Dr. Bernard Fisher, the eminent oncologist and celebrated pioneer of breast cancer research, came under intense scrutiny following allegations that one of his investigators falsified data in landmark breast cancer research. Although he was eventually cleared of all wrongdoing, the controversy called into question the treatment decisions of tens of thousands of women, because Fisher's research had demonstrated that lumpectomy and radiation were as effective as breast removal for early stage cancers—a finding that was hailed as revolutionary in women's health care.

Moving back and forth between news coverage, medical journals, letters to the editor, and oncology pamphlets, Lisa Keränen draws insights from rhetoric, literary studies, sociology, and science studies to analyze the roles of character in shaping the outcomes of the "Data-gate" controversy. Throughout the scandal, debates about the character of Fisher and other key players endured, showing how scientific knowledge is shaped by perceptions of the personal temperament, trustworthiness, integrity, and transparency of those who produce it. As administrators, politicians, scientists, patients, journalists, and citizens attempted to make sense of what had happened, and to assess the integrity of the research, they raised questions, assigned blame, attributed responsibility, and reshaped the norms of scientific practice. *Scientific Characters* thus addresses what happens when scientists, patients, and advocates are called to defend themselves in public concerning complex technical matters with direct implications for human life. In assessing the rhetoric that animated Data-gate, *Scientific Characters* sheds light on the challenges faced by scientists and citizens as science becomes more bureaucratized, dispersed, and accountable to varied publics.

Lisa Keränen is Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Colorado Denver.



"The way that Keränen untangles the literature on ethos, persona, and voice is unique, compelling, and invaluable. Her application of that approach to the story of 'Data-gate' tells rhetoricians of science, scientists, policy-makers, and laypeople a great deal about our current 'collective wishes and anxieties about biomedical science.' A well-written, strongly argued study."—Leah Ceccarelli, author of *Shaping Science with Rhetoric: The Cases of Dobzhansky, Schrodinger, and Wilson*

AVAILABLE JUNE 2010

6 x 9 • 320 pages • 1 table

ISBN-13: 978-0-8173-1704-1 • ISBN-10: 0-8173-1704-X

\$45.00s cloth (purchase below or on our website)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8173-8491-3 • ISBN-10: 0-8173-8491-X

\$36.00 ebook (purchase on our website: www.uapress.ua.edu)

Mail this form to: The University of Alabama Press, Chicago Distribution Center, 11030 S. Langley, Chicago, IL 60628

Or, fax to: 800-621-8476 (773-702-7212) Or, call: 800-621-2736 (773-702-7000)

Scientific Characters (cloth, ISBN 978-0-8173-1704-1): \$45.00 USD \$ _____

Domestic shipping: \$5.00 for the first book and \$1.00 for each additional book \$ _____

Canada residents add 7% GST \$ _____

International shipping: \$9.50 per book and \$5.00 for each additional book \$ _____

Enclosed as payment in full: (Please make checks payable to The University of Alabama Press) TOTAL \$ _____

Bill my: _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____ Discover _____ American Express

Account number _____ Exp date _____ Daytime phone (_____) _____

Full name _____ Signature _____

Shipping Address _____

(No P.O. Box) _____

• Alabama •

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA PRESS

www.uapress.ua.edu