Stanford Investigates Plagiarism Charge

It is looking into the unattributed use of copyrighted material in a textbook chapter written by the chairman of the department of medicine

Stanford University is investigating allegations of academic misconduct that have been levelled against the chairman of the Department of Medicine, Kenneth Melmon. The allegations stem from the fact that Melmon incorporated large chunks of copyrighted material from a book he helped edit into a chapter he wrote for another textbook. The material was used without attribution and apparently without permission.

Melmon says he incorporated the material reluctantly, at the insistence of the textbook's academic editor, only after he had been assured that permission had been granted. He also says that his manuscript contained prominent attribution for the reprinted text and he was "stunned" when he found it was omitted from the published version.

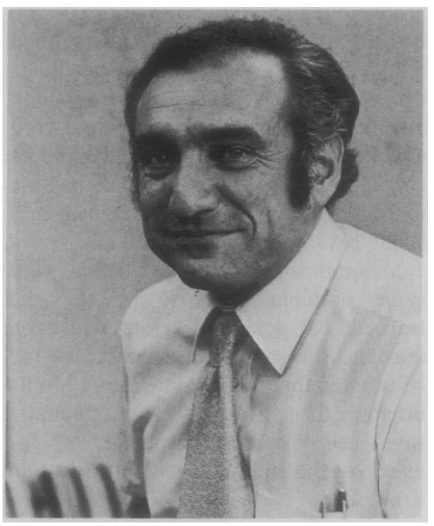
The two books in question, Goodman and Gilman's *The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics* and Williams's *Textbook of Endocrinology*, are considered the standard works in their fields. Melmon was an associate editor of the sixth edition of the Goodman and Gilman book, which was published by Macmillan in 1980, and he wrote a chapter in the sixth edition of Williams, which was published a year later by W. B. Saunders. Some 15 pages of Goodman and Gilman, taken from eight chapters by four different authors, were incorporated into Melmon's 73-page chapter.

Although the Williams book has been on the market for more than 2 years, the unattributed use of the material did not come to light until early February, when William W. Douglas, a pharmacologist at Yale University School of Medicine, noticed some of his own text from Goodman and Gilman in Melmon's chapter. Douglas discovered it when he was looking through the literature to update his chapters for the next edition of Goodman and Gilman. "I was just the first of a group of outraged authors who spotted this," he says.

Douglas called Alfred Goodman Gilman to ask why Gilman had never notified him or sought his permission for the material to be used. Gilman, a pharmacologist at the University of Texas, who edited the book with his father, Alfred Gilman, and his father's longtime collaborator, Louis Goodman, says it was the first he knew of the matter. He checked with Macmillan and then notified Dominick Purpura, dean of the medical school at Stanford, and asked for an investigation. Gilman also called Melmon.

Melmon says he had not examined the published version of the Williams book until Gilman called. When he found no attribution for the reprinted material and learned that no permission had been given, he was "just dumbfounded. It washed me away."

Purpura referred the matter to the medical school's Committee on Ethical Scientific Performance, which he chairs,



Kenneth Melmon

Says he was stunned when allegations arose.

and the committee began an internal investigation. In mid-March, just a few weeks before the investigation would be completed, photocopied pages from the two books were sent anonymously to *Science*. An article about the investigation appeared in the 22 March edition of the San Jose *Mercury News*, and the university then issued a press statement.

According to Melmon's reconstruction of the events, the whole sorry business stemmed from a combination of a breakdown in communication, Melmon's failure to read the proofs of his chapter himself, and editorial chaos following the sudden death of Robert Williams, the editor of the *Textbook of Endocrinology*. Williams died in November 1979 when the book was still in progress. Melmon was also overcommitted and in the process of moving to Stanford from the University of California at San Francisco. "He is not trying to put the blame on anybody else. He recognizes there are problems. He recognizes he should not have relied on other people," says Jack Friedenthal, a Stanford law professor who is acting on a voluntary basis as Melmon's legal counsel.

Melmon wrote chapters in both the fourth and fifth editions of Williams's *Textbook of Endocrinology* and agreed to contribute to the sixth edition. He says he was late with his manuscript, and Williams would constantly call to ask how it was coming along and make suggestions about what should be included. When the chapter was completed, but before it was sent off, Melmon says Williams "started peppering me with requests" to put in more pharmacology.

Melmon formerly worked with Williams at the University of Washington—where Williams remained until his death—and regarded him as something of a mentor. He thus found it difficult to resist Williams's request. Nevertheless, Melmon says he told Williams that the pharmacology was well covered in Goodman and Gilman and that a reference in his chapter to that work would be sufficient. As an alternative, Melmon suggested that Williams could take his manuscript and give it to somebody else to add in the pharmacology.

According to Melmon, Williams went off and read the fifth edition of Goodman and Gilman and called back a few days later even more insistent that more pharmacological details should be added. He then suggested, Melmon recalls, that Melmon should include some of the material he was working on as associate editor of the sixth edition of Goodman and Gilman.

At that pont, Melmon says he told Williams that it would be "an awful lot to ask" for permission to put this material into his own chapter. He says he told Williams he would include the material only if Williams himself obtained the permission. "I was hoping they would say no," Melmon says, "but it didn't work." Williams called back later to say permission had been granted.

Gilman, Douglas, and Norman Weiner, a pharmacologist at the University of Colorado whose text was also reproduced in Melmon's chapter, all told *Science* that their permission was neither sought nor given. An attorney at Macmillan says the company has found no

records to indicate that the publisher was asked for or gave its assent.

Melmon says he does not know what happened but speculates that Williams delegated the responsibility to obtain the permission and called him under the false impression that it had been given. Melmon has no written record of Williams's assurances, however, and Williams's own files unfortunately were discarded late last year.

At the time, Melmon was working closely with the other editors on the sixth edition of Goodman and Gilman. Why did he not seek the permission himself or even discuss it with them? He says he was spending 4 or 5 hours a day on that book and was being pushed to do more. "I sure as hell wasn't going to ask them to help me with something that diverted my attention from their book," he says.

Some observers have pointed out that it is inconceivable that a publisher would grant permission for so much material to be reprinted from a major textbook. Melmon acknowledges that, in retrospect, it should have struck him as more incredible than it seemed at the time, but "Bob [Williams] was the kind of person who could convince anybody" to do what he wanted.

Friedenthal says a draft of Melmon's manuscript indicates that he intended to give attribution.

In any case, Melmon went ahead and incorporated material from manuscripts he was working on for Goodman and Gilman. He made no attempt to disguise the origin; the published version of his chapter in Williams contains only minor style changes. Indeed, he says he even changed the title to include the word autacoids because the term was coined by Douglas and he wanted to make it clear that the chapter relied heavily on Douglas's work.

Melmon says that when he cut-and-pasted the material into his manuscript, he added handwritten notations detailing where the text came from. These notations were supposed to have been printed in the body of his chapter. He also said he left instructions for a footnote to be printed on the title page of the chapter acknowledging the use of material from Goodman and Gilman. None of the attributions were published, however, and a footnote on the title page only acknowledges support from a National Institutes of Health training grant.

(Among the 1000 references at the end of Melmon's chapter are citations to work in Goodman and Gilman, which is denoted as being in press. They are citations for specific points in the chapter, however, and in no way indicate that material was reproduced verbatim.)

Friedenthal, Melmon's lawyer, says that among the few documents that have been unearthed is a draft of the manuscript with Melmon's notations giving attribution for the incorporated material. These have been turned over to the Stanford ethics committee.

How the attributions failed to get into the printed version is unclear. One explanation, however, is that Melmon says he did not personally read the galley proofs even though production of the book was in turmoil after Williams died of a heart attack. The editorial problems were in fact so severe that the book eventually came out late with a foreword explaining the delay, and Melmon's chapter was so sloppily edited that the footnotes were not even assembled in a single list in alphabetical order.

Melmon apparently knew there were some problems because he says he learned that scientific errors had been introduced by an editor at Saunders and he insisted that the text be restored to its original form. Nevertheless, Melmon says he delegated responsibility for checking the galleys to assistants in San Francisco.

The medical school ethics committee is expected to send a report of its investigation to Stanford president Donald Kennedy in the next few weeks. It will then be up to Kennedy to determine what action, if any, should be taken. The harshest sanction would be to dismiss Melmon as a tenured professor, but Friedenthal considers that to be "not even in the realm of possibility." He adds, "without a showing that Dr. Melmon intended to commit fraud, there is no justification for any sanctions against him whatsoever."

Macmillan's attorneys are discussing a settlement with Saunders, but they decline to disclose details.

In the meantime, Melmon has sent a letter of apology to everybody involved and has offered to forgo all royalties for the Williams book. He describes himself as "very shaken, very concerned" by what has happened. Even if the investigation supports his version of the events, Melmon says "how am I going to be able to deal with my peers?"

—COLIN NORMAN

Bill Proposes Added Review of Animal Research

A new salvo in the animal welfare debate has just come before Congress in the form of "The Information Dissemination and Research Accountability Act" (HR 5098). Introduced by Representative Robert G. Torricelli (D–N.J.), it calls for all federal research grants involving experiments on animals to be reviewed by a presidentially appointed panel that would consider the whole of the world's biomedical literature before approving individual proposals. Although Torricelli says he plans to convene hearings, time to do so during this legislative session is running out.

A stated purpose of the bill is to introduce use of novel optical and electronic techniques to expedite the dissemination of biomedical information "to prevent the duplication of experiments on live animals." However, if enacted, the federal granting system would certainly be strained, with its turn-around time slowed by a review body whose members could be appointed according to political whim. Moreover, it may not be technically feasible to implement the bill.

The premise for the bill, which was developed by United Action for Animals, a New York–based group, is that the current system for communicating science is so inefficient that "duplication of experiments on live animals is the rule, not the exception." This conclusion grows out of an informal analysis the organization has conducted since 1975, collecting research reports and assigning them to simple categories. The many papers suggest massive repetition, according to director Eleanor Sieling.

Although rigorously disproving this analysis would be as difficult as proving it right, the research community is not shy in calling it simplistic and flawed. James B. Wyngaarden, director of the National Institutes of Health, which is the principal federal agency that would be affected by this legislation, rejects the premise that there is needless duplication. "The current peer review system ensures that unnecessary duplication of research does not occur," he says. Moreover, the fact that only about one-third of all research proposals now is funded is