

ed foods, including ingredients for salad bars. The use of sulfite additives in drugs, particularly those used by asthmatics, should be stopped, he argues.

The FDA official says that no particular group has forcefully opposed restrictions on the use of sulfites. "I don't think any [regulatory issue] at the agency has been moving over the past few years, short of a national disaster." The agency has assigned yet another group, a committee within FDA, to assess the extent of risk posed by sulfites.—**MARJORIE SUN**

## VA Study of Twins May Be Canceled

The Veterans Administration (VA) may cancel a \$9-million study using twins to ascertain the long-term health effects of service in Vietnam. A final decision is yet to be announced, but members of the research staff have been told to start looking for other positions.

Richard Greene, the VA's medical research director, has recommended that the study be terminated following a review in August by a panel he convened. According to Hollis Boren, the assistant medical research director, the panel concluded that the study population was too small to yield useful information about Agent Orange. Furthermore, he said the psychiatrists on the panel concluded that since twins have "built-in support systems," psychological findings from the study could not be reliably generalized to the rest of the veteran population.

Seth A. Eisen, one of the principal investigators at the VA Medical Center in St. Louis, acknowledged that definitive Agent Orange findings would be unlikely. However, he said the study was "well designed to address the question" of whether Vietnam combat had produced sustained psychological effects. "We would come up with very clear answers," said Eisen.

The first part of the study, which will continue, entails compiling a registry of 12,000 twin pairs—including veterans and nonveterans—who will be sent detailed health questionnaires.

The VA is balking at the second part, which would involve extensive physical and psychological testing of

600 twin pairs. The main focus is on posttraumatic stress disorder and how service in Vietnam has affected men's lives and psychological well-being. It also would look at the effects of dioxin exposure. The study had already been reviewed and approved twice when Greene appointed a new panel.

Many scientists regard the twin study as a formidable tool for zeroing in on problems that have defied definitive answers. Former VA official Alvin L. Young, now at the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy, said he would be "very concerned" if the study were canceled and noted that the action could aggravate an already serious credibility problem with vets.

—**CONSTANCE HOLDEN**

## Parasite Research Gets \$17-Million Boost

The MacArthur Foundation announced last week that it will give almost \$17 million to a dozen American and foreign research groups for the study of parasitology. The research will focus on the molecular biology and genetics of parasites with the goal of better controlling parasitic diseases.

Three billion people are estimated to suffer from parasitic infections, such as malaria and hookworm. Parasitic disease can lead to malnutrition, blindness, organ damage, and death.

The 5-year grant program was in part the inspiration of Jonas Salk, a member of the foundation's board of directors. About \$1.5 million has been allotted to each research group, according to Denis Prager, deputy director of the foundation's health programs. Last year, the foundation gave the World Health Organization \$1 million for parasitology. That money will largely be used for fieldwork.

Investigators at the following institutions were awarded grants: Case-Western Reserve, Columbia, Harvard, Massachusetts General Hospital, Johns Hopkins, New York University, Stanford, University of California at Berkeley, Yale, Hall Institute in Australia, National Polytechnical Institute in Mexico, and Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel.—**MARJORIE SUN**

## Congress Gives Blessing to New York Primate Lab

In its final flurry of activity, the 98th Congress gave New York University a boost it long has been seeking. Congress designated the university's primate center, the Laboratory for Experimental Medicine and Surgery in Primates (Lemsip) of Sterling Forest, a regional primate center. Although that status change could still be withheld if President Reagan decides to veto the Public Health Service Amendments Act, to which this item is attached, the designation represents a major victory for Lemsip in a drawn out battle with the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The primate center and NIH have disagreed for years over the status of and level of support for the center's program (*Science*, 3 August, p. 488). Lemsip has tried several times to become a regional primate center, a designation that the center's directors felt was deserved and that would help correct chronic funding problems. Currently there are seven regional primate centers (not counting Lemsip) that were set up nearly two decades ago. Each has a core program to support about a half-dozen scientists usually doing research with a common thread. Lemsip officials have argued that the center's research programs have been held back by lack of NIH support.

Although NIH has been interested in adding new regional primate centers to its program, it has lacked funds to do so and thus has argued that adding a new center could not be done without losing another. "It's not a closed program," an NIH official told *Science*. "It's just not easy for an institution to apply . . . and the competition would be stiff." Lemsip, however, has sidestepped the ordinary process for judging that competition by appealing directly to Congress.

A Lemsip spokesman points out that, despite the organization's use of legislation to change its status, no threat is intended to other regional primate labs. "All we were asking for was the opportunity to compete for core support," he says. "This should calm the controversy, as money will not be taken away from other regional primate centers." —**JEFFREY L. FOX**