

"Report on Science" Celebrates 5 Years On the Air

DOES smoking affect our genes? Why did insects develop wings? Are grouchy old people better off than their pleasanter peers? How are scientists using lasers to measure atoms? What is happening to health care in Nicaragua?

For 5 years "Report on Science" has been answering these, and hundreds of other questions about science and technology for an audience of some 5 million people. That makes the daily 90-second radio show one of the most important of the Association's "public understanding of science" activities. Coproduced by the AAAS Office of Communications and the CBS Radio Stations News Service, "Report on Science" airs on

commercial stations around the country. AAAS also produces "Focus," a half-hour discussion program that airs on noncommercial radio stations.

With topics ranging from astronomy to psychology, "Report on Science" probes the mysteries of science and describes new research as well as continuing scientific controversies. The program does not only inform—it piques curiosity about the world around us and how things work within it.

Recent programs have described how houseflies walk on glass (they excrete a sticky substance on their feet); how ancient tools are helping scientists to understand how the human brain evolved; how an African lake killed 37 people (an under-

ground disturbance caused the volcanic lake to produce a cloud of carbon dioxide and acid); and how a chemical—bradykinin—turns on pain.

"Report on Science" has explained why the Washington-Moscow hotline could fail when we need it most (and how it could be made fail-safe) and has described the ideas behind the new "superstring" theory of physics (in 90 seconds!).

Allen L. Hammond, editor of *Science* 86, is the on-air reporter/editor; Carol L. Rogers, head of the AAAS Office of Communications and Membership, is the show's executive producer; and Michael Skoler is the writer.

Programs are based on articles appearing in *Science* and *Science* 86, AAAS and other scientific meetings, journals, and other sources.

Recently, the program has begun using sound to complement certain stories. For instance, one story demonstrated how complex data sets are being translated into music so researchers can find patterns quickly by ear. Another featured electronic music produced by certain fish. Researchers use the sounds to study fish social interaction and, according to one scientist, mating produces some very strange music.

Researchers throughout the country play a large role in the production of "Report on Science." In addition to helping check scripts for accuracy, scientists and engineers offer ideas for program topics, suggest sources of information, and explain their own research.

"Report on Science" began airing on CBS stations in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and St. Louis in March 1981. The audience has grown substantially since then and the show is now heard on stations from Salt Lake City and Seattle to Washington, D.C. and San Juan.

If none of the radio stations in your area carry "Report on Science" and you would like to hear the program, write to us. We will work with the CBS Radio

Stations News Service to help bring "Report on Science" to a station in your area. Address letters to Carol L. Rogers, Office of Communications and Membership, at the AAAS address.

Ethics and the Professional

Scientists and engineers are often forced to make difficult ethical decisions—to facilitate that decision-making process, the AAAS Professional Society Ethics Group meets twice a year to discuss the whole range of issues professional scientists and engineers must face. At the Group's meeting last October, representatives from the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, and the Council of Biology Editors described selected activities addressing ethical concerns related to their members' professional activities. Representatives from 21 AAAS-affiliated societies participated in the discussion.

Confidentiality

Richard Taranto, an attorney for the American Psychiatric Association, reviewed a recent court decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court regarding a psychiatrist's right to control access to confidential medical records. The court ruled that portions of a patient's medical record must be revealed as part of a grand jury investigation of Medicaid fraud. The Massachusetts Psychiatric Society filed an *amicus curiae* brief opposing disclosure of most portions of patient records on the basis of the psychiatrist-patient privacy privilege.

The court reaffirmed the protection for physician-patient conversations, as well as for the content of therapy sessions, but ruled that a doctor must generally turn over information concerning drugs prescribed, electroshock therapy, and patient diagnoses.

In interpreting the Medicaid laws, the court granted the state and the public, through open



During its December meeting, the AAAS Board of Directors accepted the portrait of the Association's first president—William C. Redfield (*Science*, 1 November 1985, p. 533)—on loan from the Redfield family. Standing next to the portrait are (left to right) chairman of the Board of Directors, David A. Hamburg; president, Gerard Piel; president-elect, Lawrence Bogorad; and newly elected president-elect, Sheila E. Widnall. The portrait is on display in the first-floor reception area at the Association's headquarters.