

Edmund Pellegrino, a bioethicist from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., said unambiguously that "Medical knowledge is not a commodity that belongs to the investigator"—a view that is easy to share in principle.

Edward Scolnick of Merck Sharp & Dohme in West Point, Pennsylvania, recommended that as soon as any investigator, including those in private industry, describes results publicly, experimental reagents should

be made available to other researchers.

The participants in the IOM conference were, if not AIDS researchers themselves, the kind of prominent people who would be expected to know the system and be able to work it. That there was so much dissatisfaction and lack of information may be one of the more important revelations to come out of the conference. It led quite naturally to a call for national coordination through a non-federal body.

Paul Rogers, a former congressman who continues to be an influential figure in health policy, called on the IOM to organize such a coordinating committee, saying it would have high credibility with members of Congress. A year ago the IOM completed a thorough AIDS research and policy study and already has a good track record. IOM president Samuel O. Thier told *Science* that Rogers' proposal is clearly worth thinking about.— ■ **DEBORAH M. BARNES**

The Supercollider Sweepstakes

Twenty-five states joined in a frenzied competition last week to be chosen as the home of the superconducting supercollider (SSC), proposed as the biggest and most powerful accelerator on earth. Research on subatomic fragments has never been more popular.

According to the Department of Energy (DOE), organizer of the contest, 43 proposals were received by the deadline on 2 September. Obviously some states entered more than once. Texas led the box-stuffers with seven entries.

New York showed its eagerness by arriving first to drop off its four proposals at 4 a.m. California, a major contender, arrived minutes before the deadline with less than all of its homework done. It was delayed by the refusal of the legislature to endorse a \$560-million site development package that was part of its proposal.

In order to make the sweepstakes as fair as possible, Congress ordered DOE not to consider financial inducements offered by wealthier states. At the same time, it said DOE may consider proposed site improvements, such as new roads, water, and sewer lines. In a controversial ruling, DOE decided that the benefits of Fermilab, the existing high-energy research center in Illinois, may be considered as part of Illinois' SSC proposal. But DOE ruled that offers by other states to create Fermilab-like facilities could not be considered. This and other squabbles involving the rules may surface in Congress this fall.

Many of the proposed sites will meet the criteria established by DOE. Thus, the final selection may depend on subjective judgments of climate, cultural resources, and general quality of life.

The horde of contenders will be winnowed to a select list by a 20-member panel at the National Academy of Sciences and the National Academy of Engineering, chaired by Edward A. Frieman of the Scripps Institute of Oceanography. Their work should be done in January. From this short list DOE will recommend one site in July 1988, and, if it passes environmental review, President Reagan will announce the winner before he leaves office in January 1989. The government will then begin to build the largest scientific instrument in history.

The excitement over this \$6-billion project has grown by leaps and bounds since 30 January when the President gave his approval. The enthusiasm has less to do with an interest in the "fundamental building blocks of matter," which the SSC is supposed to illuminate, than the building blocks of regional wealth: road construction, engineering contracts, federal jobs, and technical prestige. The SSC, with its 53-mile tunnel full of supercooled magnets, will require 4500 construction workers,

2500 permanent employees, and an annual budget of around \$275 million. One need not know a hadron from a Higgs particle to know that this is a project worth fighting for. It carries all the economic advantages of a military base and none of the controversy.

Congress, however, has not authorized or appropriated funds for building the SSC, a hitch that will become apparent in debate this fall. Even though it may seem backwards, it has become standard procedure to choose a site before obtaining congressional funds. A House staffer explains that members like to know where a project, especially a fat one like this, is going to be built before they commit themselves. The trick for the SSC's backers is to keep the suspense alive and win congressional votes before a final siting decision is made. Once a site is chosen, many congressmen will be less interested in high-energy physics.

The House voted in June not to fund the SSC. The Senate has not acted yet. The question may not be settled until late fall, when differences between the House and Senate are worked out in a 1988 "continuing resolution" bill. Congress has become so inured to slapping together continuing resolutions at the last moment that it has virtually ceased using the more stately authorization-and-appropriation process. For example, nothing within DOE has been officially authorized since DOE was created. Authority to start building the SSC will probably be granted, like everything these days, in a continuing resolution.

One bill (HR 3228) sponsored by more than 200 House members and several committee chairmen would provide the \$10 million in construction money and \$25 million in R&D funds sought by the Administration.

However, a staffer on the House subcommittee on energy research and development warns that "a lot of members are concerned about the impact of SSC funding on other projects." They may demand new assurances this fall that the SSC not leech funds away from other programs. The Senate is already grappling with budget controls that call for a \$690-million cut in independent agency funding this year (*Science* 14 August, p. 717), likely to hurt space programs and the National Science Foundation. The pressure is expected to be more severe next year. Given the chronic shortage of funds, the aide asks, where will the money for SSC come from in 1989? He sees another big question: is Congress willing to make a long-term investment in the SSC? Or will it bless the SSC—like the Clinch River breeder reactor and the synfuels program—with just a moment of glory? ■ **ELIOT MARSHALL**