

Johns Hopkins Talks with MIT's Deutch

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) provost John Deutch, although still very much in the running to be that institution's next president, could soon have another opportunity to consider.

The *Baltimore Morning Sun* reported on 5 January that Deutch is one of two candidates being considered to lead Johns Hopkins University after President Steven Muller retires in June. Both Deutch and the other leading candidate, William C. Richardson, executive vice president of Pennsylvania State University, were in Baltimore for interviews in early January, according to the newspaper report.

Oat Bran Competitor

If you're a cholesterol watcher who's tired of seeing oat bran in your cereal bowl, take heart—you may have a choice. Researchers from Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge now find that rice bran may be just as good as oat bran at lowering blood cholesterol levels.

"This is the first human study with a strictly controlled dietary intake," says Maren Hegsted, the LSU nutritionist who headed the study. "We knew exactly what the participants ate so that we could isolate whether rice bran effectively lowers cholesterol."

Study participants consumed three ounces of rice bran a day, but the researchers found that both types of bran reduced total cholesterol levels an average of 7% in human volunteers. Oat and rice bran lowered LDL cholesterol, the "bad" kind that is thought to contribute the formation of artery-clogging plaques, by about 10%, without affecting the concentrations of the "good" (HDL) cholesterol.

The LSU workers do not know how rice bran brings

about cholesterol reductions. Oat bran is supposed to work because it contains large amounts of soluble fiber that interferes with cholesterol absorption. But rice bran has only about one-third the soluble fiber of oat bran.

Oak Ridge Seeks Fusion Reactor

Followers of magnetic confinement fusion research will find the inaugural edition of Oak Ridge National Laboratory's annual report interesting, if not provocative. Deputy director Murray W. Rosenthal, on page 50 of the report, publicly stakes out the laboratory's claim for a multibillion-dollar, power-producing tokamak fusion reactor. Although such a reactor is still only a gleam in researchers' eyes, it would be the logical next big machine in the fusion program. Oak Ridge is evidently anxious to get out ahead of potential rivals.

While Rosenthal does not identify it by name, it appears that the laboratory wants to build the nation's first fusion power plant—or perhaps host the long-sought, but slightly less advanced, energy-test reactor (ETR) should a proposed international collaboration for this device collapse. The ETR would be the successor to the Compact Ignition Tokamak planned for Princeton University's plasma physics laboratory in the 1990s.

Oak Ridge officials first floated the idea by the Department of Energy's (DOE) Office of Fusion Research a couple of years ago and identified the site occupied by its old gaseous diffusion uranium enrichment plant as an appropriate location for a new fusion reactor. DOE officials have made no commitments, and until now Oak Ridge has not openly publicized its goals.

But in its new annual report, Oak Ridge makes plain its ambitions for fusion R&D. Ro-

senthal says that "Martin Marietta Energy Systems [which operates the laboratory for DOE] has stated its intention to push for" having a fusion reactor sited at Oak Ridge. For now, he says Oak Ridge will "participate in the big tokamaks wherever they are and press our claim when the time comes."

Treatment Lacking for Pregnant Addicts

Crack cocaine is cutting an unprecedented swath through women and therefore newborn babies. But pregnant women get short shrift when it comes to drug treatment.

Although at least half of crack addicts are now believed to be female, "drug treatment is still predominantly a male world," says physician Wendy Chavkin of Columbia University's School of Public Health.

A survey of 78 New York treatment programs that Chavkin conducted last year found that 54% excluded pregnant women, 67% excluded those on Medicaid, and 87% excluded crack addicts. Why? Chavkin says the reasons were not clear, although three programs told a woman who called posing as a pregnant addict to try elsewhere because their facilities were located on third floor walk-ups. Chavkin speculates that the real reasons have to do with uncertainties about the medical management of pregnant women and liability fears.

Meanwhile the problem of drug-exposed babies is growing. Surveys conducted within the last 2 years at three New York hospitals showed that 11 to 20% of all newborns were affected by crack. And the scourge is not limited to the usual urban hot spots.

Ira Chasnoff of the National Association for Perinatal Addiction Research and Education says that a study in Pinellas County, Florida (home of St. Petersburg), revealed that 15% of all pregnant women tested positive for cocaine, opiates, or marijuana.

Melting the Cold War

As the Cold War comes to an end it seems only fitting that the Soviet Union's chief space scientist Roald Sagdeev will be marrying Dwight D. Eisenhower's granddaughter in Moscow next month.

Sagdeev is head of the Space Research Institute's theory division. He has been credited with opening up Soviet space science to other nations and for standing by his late friend, dissident scientist Andrei Sakharov, in the face of considerable pressure to conform.

Sagdeev met Susan Eisenhower in 1987 while attending a conference in New York on U.S.-Soviet relations. Their first discussions were about Ike's attempts to lessen tensions between the two nations. This led to collaboration in preparing Sagdeev's memoirs for publication.

The 57-year-old Soviet initially felt rather "embarrassed" that he would dare flirt with someone so well known in the political arena, the *Washington Post* reported. For her part, 38-year-old Eisenhower said she thought her grandfather would have been "extremely impressed" with her betrothed.

The two will be the very image of the modern bi-continental couple, jointly commuting between the United States and the Soviet Union. As head of the Eisenhower Group, which arranges commercial ventures in the Soviet Union, Eisenhower makes a half dozen business trips a year to Moscow.



Paul Hoesfros/NYT Pictures