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edited by RICHARD STONE

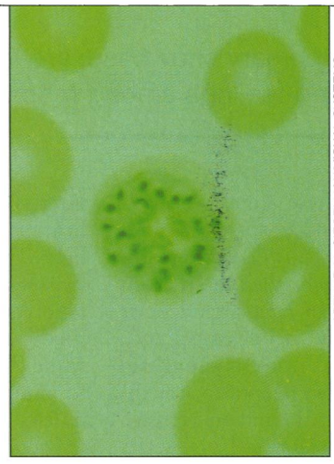
CDC Chokes on AIDS Treatment Proposal

Shitake mushrooms, ozone, and malaria have little in common, except, strangely enough, that they're all being touted as potential cures for AIDS. But malaria stands out from the crowd because claims about its curative powers have been advanced by celebrity physician Henry Heimlich, inventor of the antichoking bear hug. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), however, now says that Heimlich is poised to take his malaria therapy a step too far.

For several years, Heimlich, based at the Heimlich Institute at Xavier University in Cincinnati, has been giving malaria therapy to sufferers of cancer and Lyme disease who visit a Mexican clinic near the Texas border. The treatment, in which patients are injected with the malaria parasite, traces its history to the early 1900s, when it was first tried on syphilis. The theory is that the parasite stimulates an immune reaction that kills other foreign organisms. Results of Heimlich's malaria work remain unpublished.

In response to several inquiries from the scientific community and the media, the CDC issued a statement on 29 April that criticized Heimlich's proposal to inject malaria parasites into 10 HIV-infected volunteers. The CDC stated that "the use of induced malaria infection in HIV-infected individuals cannot be justified."

Heimlich told *Science* that his proposal was an "inhouse draft" that "by no means was to be circulated." In addition, he claims CDC has backpedaled from an offer to assist his work. Heimlich points to a September 1986 letter from Robert Kaiser, head of CDC's parasitic diseases division, who wrote that CDC "would make available certain strains" of malaria parasite for use in Heimlich's malaria therapy for cancer. Kaiser referred calls from *Science* to Carlos Campbell, head of CDC's malaria branch, who disputes Heimlich's interpretation. "We weren't prepared to offer him parasites until we saw some evidence that there was an approved protocol," he says. Heimlich says he has no set timetable for proceeding with the experiment.



ARTHUR M. SIEGELMAN/VISUAL SYSTEMS

Cure for all ills? After unleashing it on Lyme disease and cancer, physician Henry Heimlich may sic malaria bug on AIDS virus next.

Mix-Up Closes Misconduct Hearings

Don't expect tickets to the government's scientific-misconduct theater. Last November, the Public Health Service (PHS) set up a new appeals process for scientists found guilty of misconduct. Unlike the secret investigations of the PHS's Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the appeals hearings were intended to be open court-like procedures. But *Science* has learned that a bureaucratic snafu may leave the hearings' initial run, at least, in the dark.

Last month, PHS officials discovered that an error in setting up the appeals process (filing the cases by scientists' names, rather than by institution) had shrouded the hearings under the federal Privacy Act. This means closed sessions, unless the accused requests they be open to the public. PHS is rushing to draft a notice to exempt the hearings from the Privacy Act, but officials don't expect it to take effect until July.

The screw-up would affect at least the first three sets of hearings. And those aren't your everyday soap operas, either. The first, scheduled to start on 13 May: the "Cleveland Clinic case," in which National Institutes of Health Director Bernadine Healy, while chair of the clinic's research institute, cleared a researcher whom ORI later found guilty of misconduct (*Science*, 8 January, p. 167). The accused researcher in that case, Rameshwar Sharma, has declined an open hearing, says PHS attorney Andrea Selzer.

Next are the cases of Mikulas Popovic and his former National Cancer Institute colleague Robert Gallo, both of whom have been accused of misconduct in their codiscovery of the AIDS virus. Selzer says Popovic's attorney has expressed interest in opening his 7 to 14 June hearing, but there's no word yet from Gallo, whose day in court comes in mid-July.

Clinton Clears Way for Academic Pork Roast

Despite its publicly stated loathing of congressional pork projects, the Clinton Administration has decided to fund several dozen university grants earmarked in the 1992 and 1993 Defense appropriation bills.

George Bush tried to stall this pork-fest in January by taking money away from most of the 1993 academic projects and transferring it to a Pentagon account for peacekeeping in Somalia. On 26 April, however, the Clinton Administration reversed that budget maneuver, putting all of the pork projects on a fast track for approval. Waiting in the wings are 13 academic grants in the 1992 bill and 29 in the 1993 bill. One of the 1993 batch was approved by the Bush Administration in January, 20 more will get funded later this year without any review, and eight will be reviewed after the institutions submit proposals on 12 July.

Meanwhile, Defense research managers have run into a problem processing some of the 1992 pork, which by law was forced to undergo peer review: A few negative comments are cropping up among the advisory opinions. According to a Pentagon staffer, the bureaucracy is considering ways of finessing this problem—perhaps by getting the academic institutions to rewrite parts of their proposals or by asking unfavorable reviewers to withhold comment. The reason: Pentagon officials know that Congress wants these projects funded—no matter what—but they don't want to ride roughshod over the technical reviewers. But at present, a Pentagon staffer says, it looks as though the roughshod approach may prevail.

FDA Considers Labels On Bioengineered Food

Should all bioengineered foods carry labels that disclose their high-tech origins? In a policy statement issued a year ago, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said no. But now—thousands of complaints later—FDA plans to reexamine its decision.

In May 1992, FDA ruled that companies need not label food products to indicate they have foreign genes in their pedigree. However, the policy did require labeling of some bioengineered foods, such as those containing a known allergen. But this provision failed to placate environmental and consumer activists, who in the past year have showered FDA with nearly 3000 complaints.

The protest appears to have stirred FDA officials to action. Last month, the agency issued a request for scientific advice on which foods should be labeled and what the labels should say. An FDA official says the new effort may lead to tougher requirements, though he adds, "It's hard for me to envision many situations in which that would be the case."

Agbiotech executives are remaining cool and collected. "I don't sense that there's any change in FDA's position," says Roger Salquist, chief executive officer of Davis, California-based Calgene, maker of the bioengineered "Flavr Savr" tomato. Biotech critics, meanwhile, claim a victory. Claims Margaret Mellon of the National Wildlife Federation, "The [FDA] completely underestimated the level of concern and anxiety about food." FDA will gather comments on its policy through the end of July.