
Joseph J. Aleo
6610 Seawind Drive,
Fort Myers, FL 33908, USA

Professor of Pathology, Emeritus, Temple University
School of Medicine

To my knowledge, Al Gore is not a member of *Science's* editorial staff, nor is *Science* or the AAAS a branch of the Democratic Party. Publishing Gore's remarks as an editorial (rather than in a news item) gives the impression, intended or not, that *Science* is extending its imprimatur to Gore and, by extension, to his party. There may be legitimate criticisms of the Republican plan to favor basic research at the expense of applied (and of many other Republican positions on science), and it is certainly in the purview of *Science* to air these criticisms and to take an editorial stance on them. To present the words of *any* politician as an editorial, however, is to go from being a disinterested contributor to political debate to being an implicit supporter of a political organization. The idea that science at least strives to achieve impartiality and objectivity (deconstructionism momentarily aside) is an important part of the scientific culture, and of whatever esteem and influence science enjoys in the larger community. As

such, particularly in an election year, any appearance of partisanship is inappropriate for the flagship journal of the U.S. scientific community.

Scott L. Hooper
Department of Biological Sciences,
Ohio University,
Athens, OH 45701, USA

Help! We have been challenged by Gore to make something happen, but we don't have the slightest idea of what that something is.

A metaphor is apparently more than a figure of speech. Instead, it must be code for a new way of reasoning. Even several readings don't help: the editorial just doesn't make sense. We need better clues if we are to fulfill our obligation and make the "metaphor of distributed intelligence" do its stuff.

James O. B. Wright
312 Dixon Cove Road,
Sequatchie, TN 37374, USA



Whistleblower Protection

Having failed to persuade Charles W. McCutchen in personal communication that he misunderstood the population surveyed

in the whistleblower study and the handling of queries by the Office of Research Integrity (ORI), I am obliged, as project officer for the study, to respond publicly to his comment (Letters, 29 Mar., p. 1793; Letters, L. J. Rhoades, 8 Mar., p. 1345; Random Samples, 5 Jan., p. 35).

In his letter, McCutchen seems to classify as a whistleblower anyone who ever contacted ORI about a potential allegation. The final study report clearly stated that "Only individuals involved in closed cases were contacted for the study." Whistleblowers in open cases were not included because in some cases there may have been insufficient time for them to experience the full consequences of being a whistleblower and their participation in the study might impact on the open case. Individuals who contacted ORI about a potential allegation were not included in the study unless their "query" resulted in a case that was closed before the study began.

A query represents the initial contact with a potential whistleblower to determine whether the concern being expressed falls under ORI jurisdiction. Each query is extensively reviewed to determine whether the following criteria for opening a case have been met.

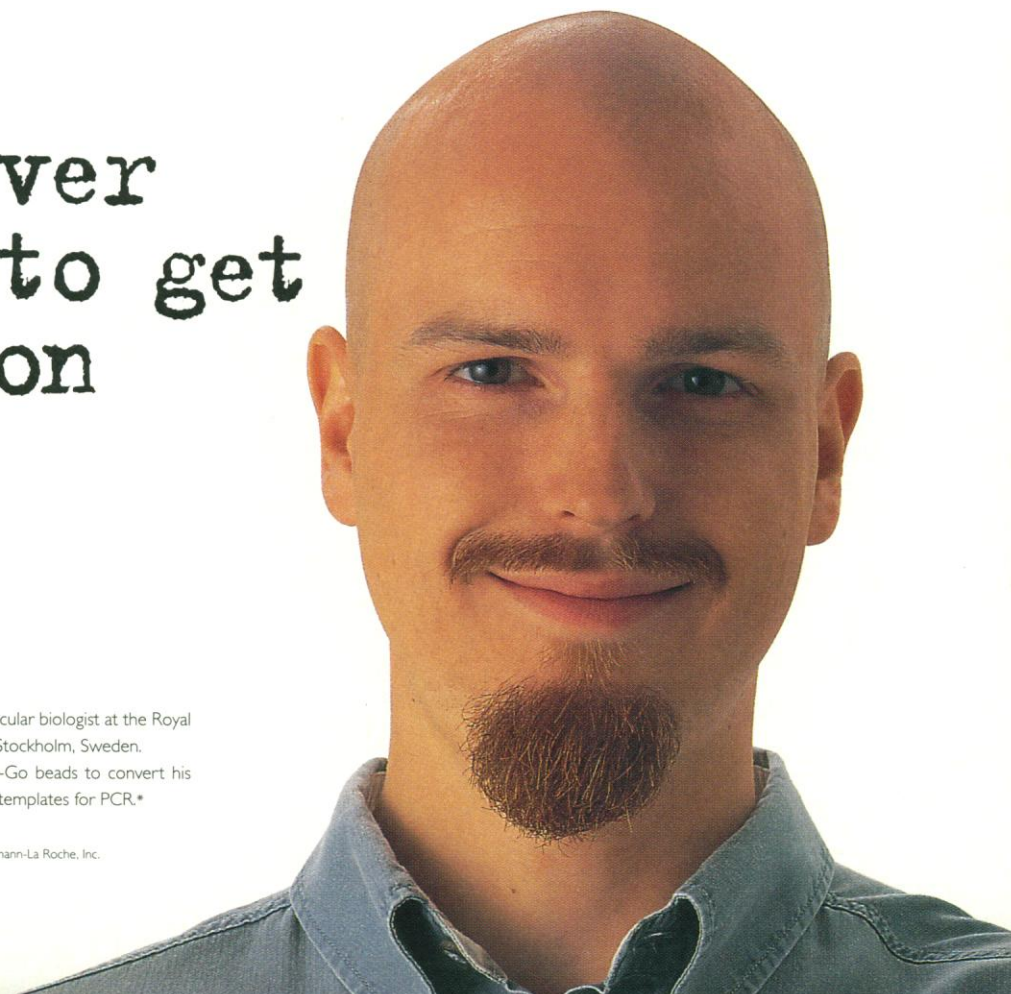
1) The research in which the alleged

**Patrik never
fails to get
a reaction**

Patrik Samuelson is a molecular biologist at the Royal
Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden.

Patrik uses Ready-To-Go beads to convert his
RNA samples into cDNA templates for PCR.*

* PCR is a patented process of Hoffmann-La Roche, Inc.



misconduct took place must be supported by Public Health Service (PHS) funds or involve an application for PHS funds.

2) The alleged misconduct must fall within the definition of scientific misconduct set forth in the PHS regulation.

3) There must be adequate information to proceed with an inquiry.

Contrary to the opinion expressed by McCutchen, the failure of an allegation to meet these criteria does not brand "the complainants, rightly or wrongly, as having made charges that were obviously false or frivolous." If these criteria are not met, the allegation does not fall under ORI jurisdiction or cannot be pursued until additional information is provided. In most cases, an ORI decision not to open an inquiry or investigation is totally unrelated to the merits of the allegation.

A decision by ORI that it does not have jurisdiction does not make a whistleblower "defenseless against retaliation" as McCutchen states. ORI holds confidential the names of all individuals who submit queries. In addition, many individuals contact ORI anonymously or before they file an allegation at their institution and, therefore, do not run a high risk of retaliation. An individual who is known as a whistleblower within the institution may

seek protection against retaliation under any available state whistleblower protection laws or grievance procedures.

Lawrence J. Rhoades

Director,
Division of Policy and Education,
Office of Research Integrity,
Public Health Service,
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services,
5515 Security Lane, Suite 700,
Rockville, MD 20852, USA



Too Soon to Dance?

I was pleasantly surprised by M. R. C. Greenwood's 29 March Editorial (p. 1787); however, after attending a seminar where a representative group of about 15 white male and two female graduate students and professors in our department discussed grant-writing, I had to reexamine the reality of the situation. A well-intentioned professor who had recently received a large grant (and would probably fall into Greenwood's "enlightened male colleague" category) asserted that if you were female or had any minority blood, you would be at an advantage. I wondered

why he told us this when he knew that all the National Science Foundation grant recipients in the room were white males and that there were only two people in the room who fell into this "advantaged" category. While I agree with Greenwood that "unqualified women and minorities" are not taking over, it remains a common misconception and gives white males the psychological advantage (which leads to power) of feeling that they must be even better because they won out over the masses of advantaged women and minorities.

Michelle Bowe

Department of Biology,
Vanderbilt University,
Nashville, TN 37235, USA

Greenwood is correct when she(?) observes that the wolves are circling. Their dance is dangerous for the weak, the unprepared, and the noncompetitive in a performance-based society. The process is called "survival of the fittest" and inures to the benefit of the species, if not to the instant gratification of all participants.

Individuals possess or acquire different talents. They should be encouraged to become "fittest" in whatever activity they choose. Not all are destined to become scientists.

Do you always get a reaction when converting RNA into single-stranded cDNA templates for RT-PCR? Patrik does—thanks to a revolutionary polymeric bead that makes these critical conversions for him in new Ready-To-Go™ Kits.

The kits utilize the new Ready-To-Go bead that avoids many potential errors common to handling aqueous reagents.

That's because the "bead" is a complete,

pre-formulated, single-dose reaction—so there's little chance of your PCR templates becoming contaminated.

Just add your sample to the ambient-stable bead and watch it dissolve—that's all the pipetting required. In under a minute, you can begin full-length first-strand cDNA synthesis. This new approach to producing cDNA is only available from Pharmacia Biotech.

Just call us at 1 (800) 526 3593 in the United States, or +46 18 16 5011 from the rest of the world, for more information. Ask about the bead that never fails to give you a reaction.



Uppsala, Sweden. (And the rest of the world)

Circle No. 29 on Readers' Service Card
See Electronic Marketplace: www.aaas.org

