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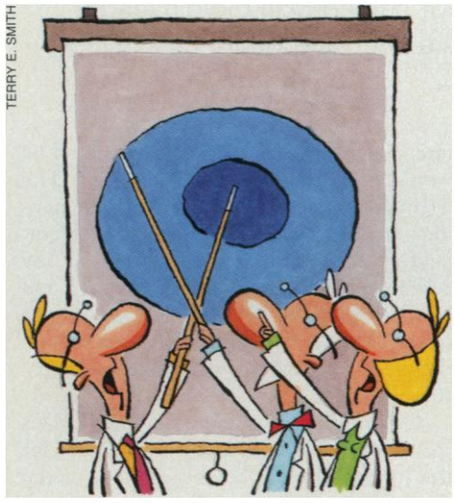

Meeting to Sort Out BRCA1 Confusion

Despite all the hoopla in the past 2 years about *BRCA1*—the first gene identified that's involved in familial breast cancer—scientists still haven't figured out how *BRCA1* makes breast tissue turn cancerous. One reason is that they can't seem to agree on where *BRCA1's* protein product appears in the cell. But a powwow next week called by Richard Klausner, director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), may help resolve the debate.

Knowing where the protein ends up—in the cytoplasm, nucleus, or outside the cell—"is the first step in trying to learn [its] biochemical function," says Edward Harlow, a biochemist at Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center in Boston and a member of NCI's advisory board. But over the past 6 months, three research teams have reported different destinations in *Nature Genetics* and *Science*. The trouble seems to be in part that the antibodies used to locate the protein may be sticking to similar proteins, giving erroneous results.

So Klausner and Harlow plan to meet informally with about two dozen researchers on 13 May at NCI in Bethesda, Maryland, to trade data and try to reconcile the findings. Some clues may come from a group led by molecular biologist Frank Calzone at Amgen Inc. in Thousand Oaks, California. The group's data, to be published in the June *Nature Genetics*, show that the *BRCA1* gene can lead to two forms of protein, one of which some antibodies don't recognize, and that the types of breast cells studied can also affect the results. "The potential for being confused is high," Calzone points out.

Nevertheless, Calzone thinks a consensus on the protein's location can be reached, perhaps right then and there. "I can't imagine this will not be resolved," he says. Harlow, who's more cautious, just hopes to "open the channels of communication."

Stage Set for Liebowitz Vote

The controversy at the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) over the tenure of President Harold Liebowitz is coming to a head, and it doesn't look good for the beleaguered official. The organization's members have voted 1145 to 194 to change the bylaws so that elected officials can be removed for cause, NAE officials told *Science* earlier this week. The results mark a critical victory for the NAE's governing council, which voted no confidence in the president at a 29 March meeting, and a blow for Liebowitz, who urged members to vote against the proposed change.

The council now intends to ask members to oust Liebowitz. Council officials contend that he has failed to implement a clear plan, is responsible for causing NAE financial troubles, and has undermined the NAE's delicate relationship with its sister academy, the National Academy of Sciences. Liebowitz was not available for comment, but he rejected the criticism in a 3 April letter (*Science*, 12 April, p. 185). He unsuccessfully tried to halt the recent ballot by urging that the proposed bylaw change be referred to a committee that would consider a host of changes to the NAE's organizational documents.

NAE's council was to meet 9 May in Washington to set when to issue ballots requesting that members decide Liebowitz's fate.

Academies May Discuss Human Rights

Human rights is not a topic that Chinese officials enjoy discussing with foreigners. But the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) is hoping that its counterpart, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), might be prepared to hold a series of discussions on the subject.

The idea comes from the U.S. academy's Committee on Human Rights, which last week marked its 20th anniversary with a symposium during the NAS annual meeting in Washington. The symposium featured a review of the committee's work and testimonials from persecuted scientists or their representatives who have been helped by a persistent campaign of letter writing, meetings, and public pleas by the committee and its supporters.

Even so, the committee "has had limited success" in China, says Nobel Prize–winning economist Lawrence Klein of the University of Pennsylvania, a member of the panel. Part of the problem, he says, may be a "difference in the definition of human rights." Chinese colleagues have repeatedly pointed to the connection between human rights and economic development, he adds, and "are tired of being lectured to about Western values" on trade, the environment, and other issues.

No mechanism has been worked out for a meeting on the topic, Klein says. However, NAS officials are hoping to meet with their CAS counterparts next January as a follow-up to a CAS visit to Washington 3 years ago, and NAS sources say human rights could be part of the agenda. "Our goal is an academy-academy exchange of views," says Klein, "so that we can better understand each other's position."

IUPAC Picks New Home in United States

After spending the first 77 years of its existence in Europe, the worldwide standards organization for chemists, the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), next year will cross the Atlantic and set up shop in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. IUPAC resided in Paris and Basel, Switzerland, before its current 28-year stay in Oxford, United Kingdom, but, says current president Albert Fischli of the Swiss drug company Hoffmann-La Roche, it was time to demonstrate the organization's commitment to its international membership. "We should leave Europe eventually," he says.

The IUPAC secretariat comprises just nine staff members, but recruits hundreds of working chemists for 33 commissions that thrash out international standards of terminology and chemical nomenclature.

U.S. chemists contacted by *Science* were surprised by the move, which was announced earlier this week. "The U.S. has been accused of throwing its weight around in IUPAC. This won't help," says nuclear chemist Paul Karol of Carnegie Mellon University.

Some IUPAC members already have a chip on their shoulder about the way the American Chemical Society's Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) has taken the lead in choosing names for new compounds, not waiting for the more gradual consensus-seeking volunteers in IUPAC's committees to reach agreement. IUPAC may have its traditions, "but we have to [classify compounds] every day," says CAS's Warren Powell. Even Fischli concedes that the two bodies would benefit from better organized contacts: "We need to collaborate very closely," he says.