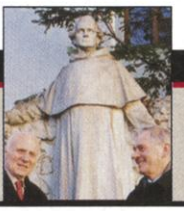




oncologist at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, says that holding all studies in the developing world to the same standard of care available in wealthy countries would make such research impractical.

But Lurie disagrees. "If you're able to pull off the study, you should be able to pull off administering medications to people," he says. Drug companies might have been willing to donate the drugs for free, he says, and a different study design "might have produced useful information about the ability of people in rural Africa to take these drugs."

The debate is unlikely to be resolved soon. NBAC will continue to hear testimony from panels of international researchers, and it plans to issue draft guidelines by early summer. But it faces a tough task: "In seven meetings around the world, we were simply not able to get a consensus" on what treatment should be provided for HIV-infected participants in poor countries, says Barry Bloom of Harvard University, who headed the UNAIDS Vaccine Advisory Committee that drew up the recently issued guidelines. He says researchers attempting to design ethical trials need to ask themselves, "Even if you can't provide antiretrovirals, can you do better than nothing?" It's a question that all parties agree desperately needs an answer.

–GRETCHEN VOGEL

ECOLOGY

Five Researchers Die In Boating Accident

A spring-break research trip ended last week in a disaster that left the tight-knit world of professional ecologists mourning the loss of five of its own. The scientists—two Americans from the University of California (UC), Davis, and two Japanese from Kyoto University—died after their boat capsized in high seas off Baja, Mexico. A third Japanese scientist was missing and presumed dead as *Science* went to press.

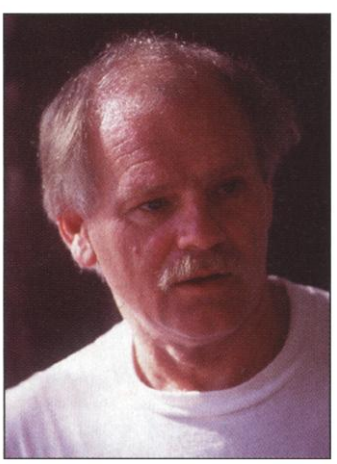
The victims of the changeable weather in the Sea of Cortez were expedition leader Gary Allan Polis, 53, a spider and scorpion expert at UC Davis; Michael Rose, 28, a postgraduate researcher in Polis's lab; termite ecologist Takuya Abe, 55, of the Center for Ecological Research at Kyoto University; and junior colleagues Masahiko Higashi, 45, and Shigeru Nakano, 37.

Polis's 17-member team set out around noon on 27 March in two small boats for a 6-kilometer return voyage from a study site on the island of Cabeza de Caballo to the isolated Mexican port of Bahía de los Angeles. The vessels became separated in windswept seas during a sudden storm. Polis's boat, which carried nine people, capsized about 500 meters offshore, survivors say. Polis apparently died of a heart attack after clinging to the swamped craft for several hours, while the other victims drowned attempting to swim to shore.

Occupants of the second boat—which carried members of a science tourism group from the Earthwatch Institute of Maynard, Massachusetts—returned to search for Polis's boat after it failed to appear. At 10:30 p.m., they reported the disappearance to Mexican authorities, who began an extensive search that eventually led to the recovery of the bodies.

The accident claimed the lives of both prominent practitioners and younger academics just beginning to make their mark. Polis, whose work on insects had been highlighted in popular magazines and even a children's book, had won the Ecological Society of America's Aldo Leopold Award and more than $500,000 in grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF) over the last decade. Abe presented a lower profile, but he was well known in his field for studies of the complex cooperative relationships between termites and plants. NSF director Rita Colwell issued a statement praising all five scientists as "examples of courage" who "put their commitment to knowledge before their comfort and personal security."

–DAVID MALAKOFF



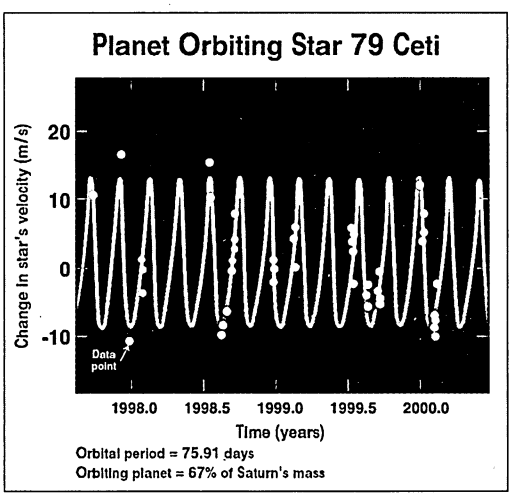
Tragedy. Gary Polis, above, and Takuya Abe were leaders on the trip.

CREDITS: (LEFT TO RIGHT) D. BARRON; C. MARCY/UC BERKELEY

ASTROPHYSICS

New Extrasolar Planets Hint at More to Come

The planet hunters have done it again. On 29 March, NASA announced that astronomers at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Carnegie Institution of Washington had bagged two new planets that circle other stars. Less massive than Saturn, the objects are the smallest extrasolar planets yet found—proof that astronomical techniques are now sensitive enough that scientists could spot our own solar system from afar. The discovery has sparked hopes that glimpses of even smaller planets, Uranus-sized and under, are soon to come.



Cosmic dance. Back-and-forth motion of stars points to ever smaller planetary companions.

"They're pushing and pushing and pushing," says Heidi Hammel, an astrophysicist at the Space Science Institute in Boulder, Colorado. "They'll probably be able to push down to Uranus's mass," she says—possibly within a year.

Over the past half-decade, the discoverers—Geoff Marcy at Berkeley and Paul Butler at Carnegie—have found roughly two-thirds of the 30 or so planets known to orbit distant suns. Because the light coming from those gassy planets is feeble compared to their parent stars' brilliance, they are nearly impossible to see with a telescope. Instead, Marcy and Butler detect them indirectly, by studying how they affect the stars they orbit.

Thanks to gravity, a planet and a star tug on each other with an equal and opposite force. As the planet pulls on the much more