"DOE and [the National Nuclear Security Agency] both had some last-minute questions that we did not feel we could adequately answer in the time available," says UC spokesperson Michael Reese. DOE spokesperson Jeanne Lopatto says that Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham had "asked for more information." The planned announcement of the regents' decision, she adds, "was a bit premature." In addition to Juzaitis, currently associate director for weapons physics at Los Alamos, the other candidates are believed to be Jeff Wadsworth, Livermore's deputy director for science and technology; Michael Anastasio, deputy director for strategic operations; and Steven Koonin, a nuclear physicist and provost at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. Juzaitis declined to comment on his candidacy.

Typically, the university's regents rubber-stamp the president's choice for director, and DOE in turn approves the selection. But recent lab controversies have forced DOE to pay more attention. Livermore's eighth and current director, Bruce Tarter, announced his retirement in December amid problems at the National Ignition Facility that have tripled its estimated $1.2 billion construction cost.

Choosing a Los Alamos manager would be "a strong rebuke to Livermore," says Hugh Gusterson, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology anthropologist who has written extensively on both labs. "Livermore has a tradition of weak management oversight," he adds, "while Los Alamos has always been thought to run a tighter ship." It would also go against the lab's history of promoting from within. "[Juzaitis] is certainly a choice that would have left people here stunned and demoralized," says one Livermore physicist.

–ANDREW LAWLER AND CHARLES SEIFE

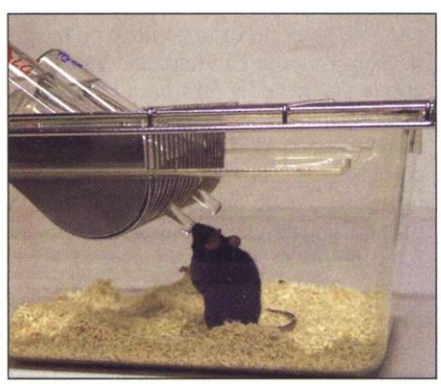
ALCOHOLISM RESEARCH

Stressed Mutant Mice Hit the Bottle

Some people can be moderate drinkers for years, only to become mired in alcohol after a stressful life event. A new mouse model described on page 931 may help explain why. In the mice, which have been genetically altered to lack a key component of their stress response system, stress apparently acts as a catalyst that makes them—perhaps permanently—more prone to drink. "This paper nicely shows the relationship between genetics and environment," says alcoholism researcher Todd Thiele of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The work comes from behavioral pharmacologists Inge Sillaber, Rainer Spanagel, and colleagues at the Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry in Munich, Germany. In previous experiments, Max Planck researchers found that mice lacking the gene encoding the receptor for corticotropin-releasing hormone (CRH) seemed to have a blunted stress response. For example, says Sillaber, the animals were less anxiety prone than normal mice, eagerly exploring well-lit boxes that nocturnal rodents normally avoid.

Because stress is a cause of drinking in humans, and because stress-induced drinking has been shown to have a genetic component, Sillaber and her colleagues wanted to see how the loss of the CRH receptor affected the animals' drinking habits. The researchers stocked the cages of normal and altered mice with two bottles to choose from: one with pure water, the other containing 2% to 8% alcohol. Both types of mice proved to be moderate tipplers, choosing pure water most of the time.



Stress response. Moderate drinkers increase intake after nasty experiences.

But the two groups diverged after being put through some difficult experiences. In one test, a model of "social defeat," a male mouse was put into the cage of a hostile stranger for a brief period 3 days in a row. When they were together, the resident mouse attacked the visitor; then they were separated by a wire mesh, preventing the visitor from being mauled but keeping him intimidated.

None of the mice's drinking behavior changed during or immediately after the test, the researchers report. But alcohol consumption by the mutant mice began to rise a couple of weeks after the unfriendly cage visits, and a month afterward, their drinking had more than doubled, whereas that of the normal mice hadn't changed.

Both groups of mice were then put through a second ordeal. For 3 days in a row, they had to spend 5 minutes in a container of water, unable to get out. The mutants' alcohol consumption rose even further. What's more, the authors report, the mutants were still drinking substantially more than the controls 6 months after their unpleasant involuntary

CREDIT: (LEFT) INGE SILLABER AND MARKUS HENNIGER

ScienceScope

Into the ITER Ring Spain has become the latest country to enter the competition to host the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), a $4 billion fusion energy project. Spain last week presented its candidate site at a Moscow meeting of the ITER partners. Spain's entry is expected to compete against offers from Canada, France, Japan, and Russia (*Science*, 22 June 2001, p. 2240).

Spain would build ITER on the site of a shuttered nuclear power plant in Vandellós, near Barcelona. Ministry of Science officials tout the site's accessibility and seismic stability. Whether those assets will give Spain an edge, however, won't be known until this summer, when European Union officials decide whether to forward one or both of the continent's entries to a final competition. The ITER parties are expected to select a winning site by the end of the year.

Imaging Chief Tapped An Atlanta radiologist will direct the newest institute at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Roderic Pettigrew (below) of Emory University has accepted the job as chief of the year-old National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering.

Pettigrew, who holds a medical degree and a doctorate in radiation physics, has spent most of his career developing cardiovascular imaging techniques. His experience makes him "a very appropriate choice" to bridge the fields of bioengineering and imaging, says Emory radiology chair William Casarella. Pettigrew declined to comment on his appointment, which was expected to be announced this week.

One of Pettigrew's first tasks will be to shepherd the transfer of certain grants to his institute from the rest of NIH. He must also decide whether to create an intramural program. Pettigrew's appointment means that African Americans now permanently head three of NIH's 27 institutes and centers.

Political Peer Review In a highly unusual move, the French Academy of Sciences this week voted to endorse President Jacques Chirac in the 5 May presidential runoff election that pits Chirac against far-right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen. Citing "exceptional circumstances," the nonpartisan academy declared that Chirac was the only candidate "capable of permitting the development of research."

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