

they are properly reviewed. Nevertheless, he makes mistakes," Maddox adds, although he declined to identify any. In a recent article in *The New Biologist* Robert Martin of the National Institutes of Health describes four major retractions at *Cell* within the past 2 years, but the fact is that only one of the papers was on the fast track, published in under 2 months.

Is the accelerated review on the ultrafast track as good as that for papers not judged so "hot," whether at *Cell* or *Science* or *Nature*? Probably not quite, concedes Collins, who has experienced it several times over the past few months. "The question is, are there subtle pressures in the atmosphere of rapid publication that lead the editors and reviewers to treat the paper in a less critical way? To say, 'Yes, there are some little problems, but we will let them go'? I expect there are fewer revisions going on in these pressure-charged

situations than for the usual paper."

Koshland, too, worries about the minor errors that may creep in if rushed papers are not finetuned—and about the major errors that editors thus far seem to have avoided. "In the long run, if *Cell* publishes too many bad papers as the result of rushing, it will lose its credibility. *Science* has a good reputation, and that is more important than publishing in 2 weeks. But," he adds "we do everything possible to publish fast."

Is there an alternative to the race? Yes, agree researchers, administrators, and at least two editors: for competing teams to arrange simultaneous publication, preferably in the same journal, as Hendrickson and Harrison did last fall for their papers on the AIDS binding site. They decided to publish jointly, Hendrickson says, because they realized that "if we went to two different journals, it would inevitably lead to a race between us and the

two journals, and then other elements would enter in than who did it first, like how good was your choice of journal and your relationship to it."

While investigators and editors would prefer publication in the same journal, if two authors have unknowingly submitted their work to different journals, the editors at *Science* and *Nature* will sometimes try to coordinate publication. Simultaneous publication "probably serves everyone's needs best," says Collins, "but it requires people to give a little." It won't work when the two teams are competing and not communicating. Nor will it work when journal editors won't talk to each other. And that means that unless editors come up with some alternative procedures to handle these priority scrambles, as the physics journals have attempted to do, the trend is likely to be with us for some time.

■ LESLIE ROBERTS

Third Strike for Idaho Reactor

Which is mightier, peer review or pork barrel politics? The fate of the Power Burst Facility (PBF), an aging nuclear reactor in Idaho, hangs on the answer to that question. A handful of researchers and legislators hope to turn the facility into a research and cancer treatment center and they have persuaded Congress to stuff money into the Department of Energy's budget to begin modifying the reactor. But, for the third time in recent years, an independent review panel has just advised against spending federal dollars on the project*. Energy Secretary James Watkins is now faced with the choice of siding with his peer reviewers or with powerful members of Congress.

Congressional pressure has already kept the facility going well beyond its planned lifetime. DOE has sought since 1985 to decommission the reactor and tear it down, but Idaho's congressional delegation has managed to insert language in DOE's annual appropriations bills forcing the department to keep the machine on standby at a cost of about \$3 million a year. Their ultimate aim is to convert the reactor, which is located at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, into a facility for a cancer treatment known as boron neutron capture therapy. This consists of injecting boron compounds into the blood stream and focusing beams of neutrons on a tumor. Boron in the tumor "captures" neutrons, giving the surrounding cells a dose of radiation.

The price tag for converting the reactor—at least \$30 million—spread alarm last year among researchers at Brookhaven National Laboratory and the New England Medical Center, who also are studying this potential cancer therapy. They are concerned that their federal funding would be lost if DOE is forced to fund the PBF conversion and have lobbied hard against the idea (*Science*, 13 April 1990, p. 156). Researchers and engineers affiliated with

the Idaho laboratory have responded that the PBF has significant advantages over other medical reactors for treating some types of cancers because it delivers neutrons at a higher rate.

Opponents of the Idaho plan picked up some powerful support last April, when DOE's Health and Environmental Research and Advisory Committee issued a report stating that "there was no evidence to support the conversion of the PBF to a clinical facility." The committee cited the conclusions of a National Cancer Institute group that reported 8 months earlier that adequate boron compounds had not yet been developed.

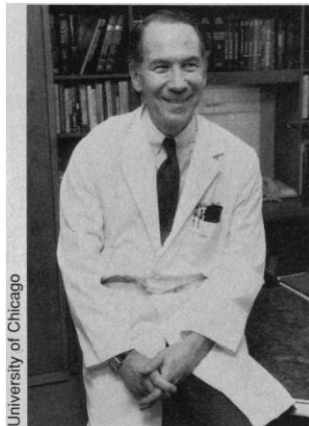
The Idaho researchers and their congressional delegation were not deterred, however. In June, Senators James McClure and Steve Symms asked Watkins to convene an independent panel to examine once again the merits of converting the PBF. Watkins agreed, and in August he turned to the Institute of Medicine to carry out the task. But Idaho legislators weren't prepared to wait: They used their influence to include \$13 million in DOE's 1991 budget for design studies, limited reactor modifications, and maintenance.

The IOM committee, which was chaired by Samuel Hellman of the Pritzker School of Medicine at the University of Chicago, issued its report on 2 January. Its verdict: "There is neither enough information nor is the information currently available sufficiently encouraging to convert the PBF or to maintain it for this purpose." Hellman told *Science* that research on the therapy should continue, but said his committee agreed that the PBF reactor is not needed to carry it out.

If Watkins decides to take the IOM panel's advice, he has two options: ask Congress to rescind the \$13 million it appropriated for fiscal year 1991, or spend the money and try to close down the reactor in 1992. Either way, the Idaho delegation would not get what it wants—something it has done with remarkable regularity in the past.

■ MARK CRAWFORD

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Not needed. Hellman's panel gave PBF low marks.

*Committee to Review the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory Proposal to Convert Its Power Burst Facility for Use in Boron Neutron Capture Therapy, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.