

Amsterdam Medical Faculty and Goudsmit's superior, to acknowledge that an official university investigation of Goudsmit's work would be desirable. Goudsmit agreed in order to clear his reputation. Two months later, at the end of November, the faculty appointed a committee under Alex van der Eb, a professor of molecular biology from Leiden, to investigate further. The committee visited Goudsmit's lab, talked to researchers there, and scrutinized lab notebooks and other documents. Its report, published on 1 March, corroborated earlier criticisms and unearthed a number of other flaws.

The committee reported, for example, that some results were based on a single experiment, rendering the claim of reproducibility "not justified." It also concluded that Goudsmit and his virology team had selected favorable data—in one case they carried out two identical experiments but published only the one that supported their claims—and presented measurements of the DNA and proteins in a misleading way. Moreover, essential virological controls were missing, and controls for cytotoxicity were insufficient. Finally, the panel said Goudsmit omitted from the main table results from a control with random bits of modified DNA—as opposed to DNA targeted at HIV—that flatly contradicted the main claim of specific inhibition.

The Medical Faculty has accepted the report's conclusions and has asked for "guarantees to forestall future repetition." It has also acted on a suggestion in the report that Goudsmit's "heavy workload" prevented him from properly supervising his co-workers; new postdocs and senior staff have been asked to help with supervision. But because the faculty considers the episode a "lapse," it has decided to take no action against Goudsmit or his co-workers. Goudsmit has not commented on the report.

Van der Eb's report blames the great social importance of the fight against AIDS and the high publication pressure in the field for the errors of the Amsterdam virologists. But quite apart from its scientific aspects the Buck-Goudsmit affair has proved how dangerous it can be to base clinical claims on very early stages of basic research. Buck's speculation that his laboratory results would lead quickly to a treatment, AIDS patient groups and others have said, raised false hopes and, consequently, pointless suffering and disillusionment.

■ FELIX EIJGENRAAM

Felix Eijgenraam is a science writer with NRC Handelsblad in Rotterdam who covered these events for the newspaper.

Committee Treats Healy Gently

"We're not usually this nice," Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) said last week at hearings on Bernadine Healy's nomination to be director of the National Institutes of Health. Mikulski had just tossed Healy an easy question—or as Mikulski called it, "a softball"—about her views on women's issues. Most other members of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, including chairman Edward Kennedy (D-MA), also gave Healy an easy time, and there now seems little doubt that the Senate will approve her for the nation's top biomedical research job.

A Harvard- and Johns Hopkins-trained MD, Healy currently heads the 400-staff Research Institute of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation and also works in the clinic's cardiology department. Well briefed on the political side of the NIH job, Healy herself introduced the one issue that might have brought her some right-wing opposition: She said she was aware that the Administration had imposed a moratorium on fetal tissue research and "I am prepared to support [it]."

The only awkward moment in the hearing came when Senator David Durenberger (R-MN), himself recently censured for accepting free trips and gifts, probed Healy's views on conflict of interest rules. Durenberger read a news item that described Healy as being one of a group of scientists who had owned stock in the Genentech Corporation while involved in a review of its product, Tissue Plasminogen

Activator. In response, Healy said: "I was not a TPA investigator while I owned stock...I have specifically avoided holding stock in a company for which I was testing a product." She said she had purchased the Genentech stock in this case "2 years after" her work for the TPA review panel was finished. However, she agreed that researchers sometimes get in trouble because they fail to realize that "perception is as important as reality when you're dealing with public trust." She is in favor of having clear "guidelines" to help NIH employees and grantees avoid conflicts.

In answering a related question, she said that it was an "outrage," if true, that universities like Stanford have been charging the government for parties, yachts, and antique furniture billed through the indirect cost allowance on research grants and contracts. She reminded the senators, however, that scientists themselves are not involved in deciding what is charged to the government.

As for Mikulski's question on women and research, Healy said that, if confirmed, she would try to promote women to positions of leadership in biomedical research and focus on health problems that afflict women—such as cardiovascular failure after age 65. Women have been neglected in the past, she said, and it would be good for research and for the public interest if NIH could shift its emphasis a bit.

In her prepared remarks, Healy said that her chief goal as director would be to bring talented young scientists to NIH and retain those already there. To illustrate how tricky it can be to foster good science, she told a kind of parable involving the lead characters from the play *Amadeus*. Mozart, she said, came across as an inspired artist, but also, at times, as "difficult, childish, nasty, and unconventional." Salieri, on the other hand, was easygoing, "talented in a workman-like way," and popular at court. Salieri would probably have fared better than Mozart in the equivalent of today's peer review system, Healy said, but if medicine is to succeed, "the Mozarts must be allowed to flourish" as well. "Energetic and irreverent youth must thrive along with the older and wiser heads," she said.

Although Healy didn't say who she had in mind as the Mozarts of NIH, the committee members listened attentively. Several said they would ask Healy to give written answers to some detailed questions before casting a vote. But, by the end of the morning, the committee seemed to be unanimously behind Healy's nomination, and that will be good news for those unnamed Mozarts.

■ ELIOT MARSHALL



Bernadine Healy

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