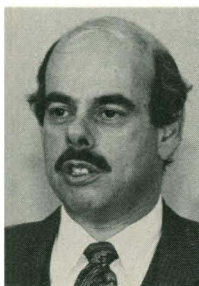


Fetal Fracas

■ A bitter struggle is shaping up between Representative Henry A. Waxman (D-CA) and the Bush Administration over fetal tissue research. Waxman, who chairs the subcommittee on health and the environment, has proposed authorizing legislation for all programs of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that explicitly overturns a ban on federal funding for research on fetal tissue transplantation imposed by the Administration. Aides say he will kill the legislation if the provision is removed.



Henry Waxman

Last week, Waxman signaled his intent in no uncertain terms when he called Bernadine Healy, the newly appointed NIH director, to testify before his subcommittee and pounded her about the Bush Administration's ban. "We cannot sit by...as ideologues overrule scientists about research," Waxman said. To underscore the promise of such research, Waxman invited Robert N. Slotnick, an obstetrician and geneticist from the University of California at Davis, to testify at the hearings. Last year, using private money, Slotnick used tissue from an aborted ectopic pregnancy to treat another fetus suffering from a genetic metabolic disorder. Slotnick says he will not be able to pursue his research in the future without federal assistance.

Healy is walking a political tightrope on this issue. In 1988 she was part of the majority on an NIH advisory committee that recommended overturning the ban, but Secretary of Health Louis Sullivan overruled the recommendation. Last week, Healy reiterated her willingness to support the Administration's position (*Science*, 22 March, p. 1423), but said she did not agree with the rationale behind it.

Indirect Costs: More to Come

■ Next on Representative John Dingell's (D-MI) indirect cost griddle: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Investigators on the staff of Dingell's subcommittee on oversight and investigations report that after an initial probe of the university's books, auditors had "an ugly meeting" with MIT professor and former provost John M. Deutch, and the subcommittee plans to go public with its findings in the next few weeks.

Meanwhile, several universities, shocked by the grilling Dingell recently gave Stanford University over its indirect cost abuses, have been busily comb-

ing their books. Harvard Medical School last week announced that it is withdrawing \$500,000 in questionable charges for indirect costs in fiscal year 1991. Caltech withdrew a similar amount from its billings last month.

There's likely to be more to come. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) said last week that it is auditing the books of 13 universities, and

Indirect Cost Targets

University	Auditing Agency
Johns Hopkins	HHS
U. Pennsylvania	HHS
Yale	HHS
Dartmouth	HHS
Washington U.	HHS
U. Southern California	HHS
U. Pittsburgh	HHS
U. Texas Medical Center	HHS
U. Michigan	HHS
U. Chicago	HHS
Emory	HHS
Duke	HHS
Rutgers	HHS
Stanford	GAO
MIT	GAO
Harvard Medical School	GAO
U. California at Berkeley	GAO

the congressional General Accounting Office (GAO) is looking into four others.

Let's Plan Those Discoveries!

■ Researchers at several of the National Laboratories run by the Department of Energy (DOE) are fretting about plans to impose new "quality assurance" checks on the activities of scientists—in addition to the usual peer review and inspec-

tions by the infamous "tiger teams" (see page 366). The idea has emerged in a preliminary stage and is now just a proposal. But it could take root and become a hard and fast policy.

To give the flavor of what could be in the offing, one top

laboratory official who's trying to head off this initiative quotes a memo sent out by DOE's Chicago operations office. Under the heading, "Laboratory Research Activities," it says: "The conduct of scientific investigation and experimental activities shall be planned. Those plans shall be documented and should address as appropriate the experimental methods and/or mathematical models to be used, source of input data, equipment used and its configuration, and documentation requirements. If it becomes necessary to change the methods being followed or models being used as work proceeds, those changes shall be documented." This is a prescription for paralysis, some say.

This quality assurance plan may be brand new, but it's not unfamiliar. It calls to mind a memo sent out by the secretary of energy in 1989, asking DOE chiefs to send in descriptions of upcoming events in eight categories to fill up the secretary's calendar from June through December. The most astonishing item was number 7, demanding advance notice of all "significant scientific discoveries and breakthroughs."

Academy Panel to Set Priorities in Aging Research

■ An upcoming report by the National Academy of Sciences on aging could prove controversial. Like most academy studies, it recommends a big dollop of research funds—to understand the fundamental processes of aging and to improve the quality of life for the elderly. But it also contains specific recommendations for what research should be funded—and precisely how much money should be spent in categories ranging from basic biomedical research to clinical and behavioral studies and on the health

care delivery system.

The report, to be released in June, is the product of 2 years of work by the 18-member Committee for a National Research Agenda on Aging, chaired by Julius R. Krevans, chancellor of the University of California at San Francisco. The scientists and health care experts on the committee ranked 15 research areas, with the intention of establishing priorities for the next 20 years for the field of gerontology.

It's an ambitious task, says Ted Lonergan, study director for the committee. "This report is more specific and more far-reaching than any other." Two earlier studies were prepared by the National Institute on Aging in 1980 and 1982.



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