

OSI Investigator “Reined In”

The head of the Gallo and Baltimore investigations has been taken off the cases; Bernadine Healy's role in the move prompts congressional hearing

SUZANNE HADLEY, WHO FOR SEVERAL YEARS has supervised NIH's investigations of intramural AIDS researcher Robert Gallo and Tufts immunologist Thereza Imanishi-Kari, has been taken off these two prominent cases. Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI) director Jules Hallum told her early this month to turn in her files from the two investigations. Hallum, while admitting to *Science* that he told Hadley he'd been ordered to “rein you in,” nevertheless characterizes Hadley's removal from the investigations as a routine and long-expected personnel transfer. “That's absurd,” Hadley says. The irony is almost palpable. Hadley, who has spent most of the last 4 years investigating misconduct brought to light by whistleblowers, is now virtually a whistleblower on the office she helped found.

Hadley's departure from the Gallo and Imanishi-Kari cases, first reported in the *Chicago Tribune*, has already created a serious problem for NIH director Bernadine Healy. Democratic and Republican members of Representative John Dingell's (D-MI) oversight and investigations subcommittee have begun to charge that Healy has acted in an irregular, high-handed manner. “There is a real problem in the way Dr. Healy is handling the OSI,” says one aide to a Republican member. Even worse, this aide claims, Healy may be showing bias where OSI is concerned, since OSI is currently investigating a misconduct case involving a biochemist at Healy's old institute, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. Healy, in fact, directed a preliminary institutional inquiry in this case that concluded no further investigation was necessary.

As *Science* went to press, Healy was on vacation and unavailable for comment, according to an NIH spokesperson. But sources within NIH and aides to the Dingell subcommittee—some of whom have long been accused of bias where NIH is concerned—have outlined many of the issues at stake in this latest controversy.

The first hint of new troubles for NIH

came when Hadley asked University of Chicago immunologist Ursula Storb, a member of the scientific panel in the Imanishi-Kari investigation, to resign because of a potential conflict of interest (*Science*, 21 June, p. 1607). Sources close to the OSI say that a letter of recommendation Storb had written for Imanishi-Kari years earlier spoke highly of



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To suggestions that her removal was a routine personnel matter, Hadley says, “That’s absurd.”

Imanishi-Kari's work with transgenic mice—work that was included in a paper co-

authored by Nobel laureate David Baltimore later shown to contain fraudulent data. These sources add that Hadley's decision to ask for Storb's resignation was initially unanimous within OSI. But Healy reportedly disagreed strongly when she learned of the action and forced Hallum to reverse the decision.

Since then, Healy has reportedly taken a series of actions with respect to the OSI investigations of Gallo and Imanishi-Kari that Dingell committee aides characterize as bizarre. For instance, she ordered the NIH general counsel, Robert Lanman, to examine Hadley's notes from telephone conversations with Margot O'Toole, the whistleblower in the Baltimore case, after reportedly hearing that Hadley had grown “too close” to O'Toole. And she ordered Hadley to rewrite sections of a draft report on the Gallo investigation—which OSI has provided to Gallo and Mikulas Popovic, another subject in the investigation, for comment—objecting to what she termed “editorializing” in the report's conclusions, as well as to direct quotations in the text, according to NIH and congressional sources. Hallum says the changes Healy sought would have affected the report's format, but not its substance. When Hadley refused to make those changes, Healy withdrew her request.

Finally, Healy is reported to have been upset by Hadley's recent decision—first revealed in the *Tribune*—to initiate a new investigation of yet another assistant to Gallo. Congressional aides say that OSI's target is M. G. Sarngadharan, a cell biologist now at Advanced Bio Sciences in Kensington, Maryland, but they declined to reveal Hadley's reasons for opening the inquiry. Soon thereafter, Hallum told Hadley to return the Gallo and Imanishi-Kari files and to make no further decisions in the cases.

A spokesperson says that Hadley, who left the deputy directorship of OSI for another NIH office in March, had been expected to continue to oversee the Gallo and Imanishi-Kari in-

vestigations only until draft reports on the cases had been completed. That explanation, Hadley says, is “simply untrue.” Indeed, Hadley told *Science* when she left OSI that she would be responsible for seeing the Gallo and Imanishi-Kari investigations through to completion (*Science*, 29 March, p. 1551).

Healy can expect questions on these matters at a congressional hearing already scheduled for 1 August. At the same time, she will probably also face pointed queries about the OSI investigation of her former Cleveland Clinic colleague. Sources say that Healy has recused herself from all NIH decisions regarding the case, but the Republican staffer says her actions still raise serious questions about her judgment.

Healy's defenders within NIH have suggested that the issues in Hadley's departure have been blown out of proportion because someone is “out to get her.” Indeed, Republican members of the subcommittee admit they're irritated because Healy “embarrassed” Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan by approving an adolescent sex survey that Sullivan later rejected. But aides to Dingell himself dismiss any talk of hidden agendas. “Everything Hadley has told us has checked out 100%” against documents the committee has received from NIH, says one. “She's obviously been treated very shabbily in this thing.” By the looks of it, Healy will have needed her vacation when she returns to Washington. ■ DAVID P. HAMILTON