

## **FASEB NEWS**

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# **Scientists Urge HHS to Reject Recommendations of Report on Scientific Misconduct**

More than 285,000 Scientists Oppose New Definition of Misconduct,

Call for Equal Protection of Accused Scientists, and

Criticize Increased Federal Regulation of Research Institutions.

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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Bethesda, MD (May 13, 1996) -Fifty professional societies with a collective membership of more than 285,000 scientists in the fields of biological and biomedical research are urging the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to reconsider key recommendations of a report on misconduct in science by the Commission on Research Integrity (CRI).

[In a joint letter to William Raub, DHHS Science Advisor](#), the scientific societies say that although some parts the CRI report "have considerable merit," there are "many recommendations that we consider inappropriate and therefore form an inadequate basis for policy-making by the Department of Health and Human Services."

In particular, the scientists oppose a new definition of scientific research misconduct recommended by the CRI that would replace the terms "fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism" - - as proposed by the National Academy of Science - - with the less precise terms "misappropriation, interference, and

misrepresentation."

"The definition of scientific research misconduct must be sufficiently precise to provide an unambiguous basis for investigating and adjudicating cases of alleged misconduct, and serve as a clear guide for practicing scientists, teachers and administrators," said Ralph A. Bradshaw, Ph.D.,

president of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB). FASEB convened an April 30 meeting of the Coalition of Biological Scientists that led to the adoption of the consensus position conveyed in today's letter.

The Coalition feels that "fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism" are precise and unambiguous terms all scientists understand. The overly broad, legalistic and open-ended definition proposed by the CRI could stifle the intellectual creativity that is the hallmark of our scientific community, by opening scientists up to unpredictable and ill-defined charges of misconduct.

The Coalition is also calling for greater protection of the rights of individuals accused of scientific misconduct. In their statement, they argue that the CRI proposal fails to give proper balance to both sides of these disputes and ignores the traditional principle of due process. "The CRI plan would publicize cases in which scientists are found innocent of all charges of misconduct, potentially causing unwarranted damage to a scientist's reputation by the obvious implication that charges had been brought against him or her in the first place," said Dr. Bradshaw.

The Coalition also opposes the increased federal regulation of scientific research institutions advocated by the CRI. The scientists criticize the costly administrative mechanisms recommended in the CRI report "that will reduce the productivity of the public's investment in science." According to Dr. Bradshaw, "The CRI report is unrealistic regarding the ability of research institutions to pay for the many programs it apparently expects them to provide."

The scientists' letter affirms three principles: 1) all issues of misconduct should be handled at the level of the research institution, whenever possible; 2) falsification, fabrication and plagiarism are so detrimental to the conduct of science that government action is appropriate when institutions fail to provide proper oversight of federally-funded research; and 3) less egregious behaviors should not be overlooked but should be dealt with at the institutional level; institutions are encouraged to establish education programs on the proper conduct of research.

Speakers at the meeting included William Raub, Ph.D., Science Advisor, Office of Science Policy, DHHS; France Cordova, Ph.D., Chief Scientist, NASA; Kenneth Ryan, M.D., Chairman, CRI; and Howard Schachman, Ph.D., Member, FASEB Public Affairs Advisory Committee.

**The scientific societies endorsing the statement are:**

American Association for Dental Research

American Association of Anatomists

American Association of Immunologists

American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists

American College of Sports Medicine

American College of Toxicology

American Federation for Clinical Research

American Gastroenterological Association

American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering

American Ornithologists Union

American Physiological Society

American Psychological Association

American Society for Animal Science

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

American Society for Bone and Mineral Research

American Society for Cell Biology

American Society for Clinical Nutrition

American Society for Investigative Pathology

American Society for Microbiology

American Society for Neurochemistry

American Society for Nutritional Sciences

American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics

American Society for Virology

American Society of Hematology

American Society of Human Genetics

American Society of Parasitologists

Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology

Association for Women in Science

Association of American Physicians

Association of Biomolecular Resources Facilities

Association of Systematics Collections

Biomedical Engineering Society

Biophysical Society

Endocrine Society

Environmental Mutagen Society

Genetics Society of America

International Society for Interferon and Cytokine Research

Orthopedic Research Society

Psychological Society of America

Protein Society

RNA Society

Society for Cryobiology

Society for Neuroscience

Society for the Study of Reproduction

Society for Physical Regulation in Biology and Medicine

Society of Chinese Bioscientists in America

Society of Nematologists

Society of Toxicology

Teratology Society

Wound Healing Society

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