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Monsieur de Pracontal
L'Evenement
2, rue Christine
75280 Paris Cedex 06
FRANCE

Dear Monsier de Pracontal:

I read with shock, sorrow, and eventually considerable anger your article in "L'Evenement" on SIDA and the research of me and my co-workers at the U.S. National Cancer Institute, NIH vs. that of Montagnier at the Institut Pasteur, particularly since I had been so favorably impressed by you in Dakar. At a time just following a US-French "Virus and Cancer" meeting in Martinique where there was overall much good will and at a time of attempted renewal of cooperation and friendship as indicated in the "Paris Match" article, your piece of one-sided slander was published. The only saving point is that the article is completely silly. Suddenly, we have an LAV1-A and an LAV1-B! Where and when did this appear? This is news to all. It sure was not described before; and even if it were, of what meaning is this? At least 10 to 20% of patients have variants of the main virus, and what should a variant be like? Obviously, it should be like the parent since it is derived from the parent and since the parent HTLV-III strain B2 (our prototype) is like LAV so a variant should be like its variant! We now have conclusive data that any two isolates of HTLV-III can vary from only 0.8% difference (about 90 nucleotides) to 10% (about 950 nucleotides). Our prototype (HTLV-III-B2) differs from LAV by 150 nucleotides about 1.6%. This is not a small difference and cannot arise in two months of tissue culture. Moreover, if you spoke with me before writing your horrible article you would have learned that we have 230 isolates of HTLV-III, that we published on 101 isolates last year, and on 48 isolates the year before. You would also have learned that we have 9 isolates in mass production in our H9 cell line and that we had an HTLV-III isolate called HTLV-III-RF or HTLV-III (HAT) which we mass produced at exactly the same time as our prototype HTLV-III-B2 (which is close to LAV), published at the same time, and showed that the HTLV-III-RF differs from LAV by almost 1000 nucleotides! Finally, you would have learned that HTLV-III-RF was patented exactly at the same time as HTLV-III-B2! In short, there are numerous HTLV-III. Enough is enough! The next time you write about this field I hope and I trust you will do it with the intelligence and care I saw in you in Dakar.

It is like a tragicomedy led by malicious persons looking for trouble for others and in the end hurting science and the patients with this horrible disease. You have a role in the press to respect these patients.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Gallo, M.D.

RCG/bj

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