

Closeout of OIG 90-3123 (M90-15)

On March 20, 1990, OIG received an allegation of noncompliance with NIH Guidelines on Recombinant DNA by an NSF grantee, [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED] Center, [REDACTED].

The suspected noncompliance was based on a publication co-authored by the subject and two other investigators. The acknowledgment line in the paper read "This research was supported by the National Science Foundation" implying that all work reported in the paper had Foundation support. The paper reported that using recombinant-DNA techniques, certain organisms were given new properties that could potentially cause undesirable effects if the organisms were accidentally released into the environment. These experiments, it was alleged, did not have Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) approvals as required by the NIH guidelines which NSF imposes on its awards as a grant condition.

Expert advice was that approvals were required for some of the experiments reported in the paper and that the IBC approvals available at that time from the involved institutions did not appear to cover these experiments.

After determining who performed specific parts of the scientific work described in the paper and that the work was actually conducted at two different universities, OIG concluded that:

--There was no violation of NIH Guidelines on Recombinant DNA by the subject (NSF-funded awardee) because no experiments performed at his university required IBC approval.

--All experiments requiring IBC approvals were conducted by the lead author on the publication who did not have any NSF support.

--The acknowledgment in the paper should have indicated that NSF provided only partial support for the published work.

--Required IBC approvals for the regulated experiments at the lead author's institution appeared too broad and did not adequately relate to the experiments reported in the paper, although the IBC chairman at the lead author's institution claimed to the contrary and said that his IBC understood that the experiments reported in the paper were covered by its approval documents.

No actions were recommended against any researcher.

OIG reported findings to the cognizant NSF program officials, the co-authors of the paper, and the chairman of the IBC at the lead author's institution.

cc: Inspector General

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