

SCIENTIFIC FREEDOM

Medical journals set new publishing rule

Authors must attest company sponsors did not control reporting

BY SUSAN OKIE
Washington Post

About 12 of the world's most prominent medical journals are issuing a joint editorial this week stating that they will reject any scientific studies that do not come with an assurance that the sponsor — whether a drug company or other organization — gave researchers complete access to the data and freedom to report the findings.

The unprecedented stand by journals based in eight countries is a response to what editors say is

excessive control by drug companies over how the results of studies they sponsor are analyzed, interpreted and reported.

"This is a very widely prevalent problem which ... has profound public health implications," said Richard Horton, editor of the British journal the Lancet, one of the participating journals. In some cases, patients have died because published studies overstated drugs' benefits or minimized their risks, Horton said.

The five general medical journals in the world are among those that will publish the editorial, and at least six additional journals have agreed to adopt the policy, said Catherine DeAngelis, editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association. She said the goal is to help researchers preserve

their scientific freedom when negotiating agreements with companies that sponsor their work.

"I am not against pharmaceutical companies," she said. "What I object to is the use of my journal as an advertisement mechanism rather than a vehicle for the distribution of sound medical science."

A drug industry trade association issued a statement supporting the journal editors' new policy. "We respect their rights and encourage all authors to abide by their rules regardless of their affiliation," said the statement by Bert Spilker, senior vice president for scientific and regulatory affairs of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

A group of editors concerned about increasing industry influ-

ence on the conduct and reporting of company-sponsored studies agreed to adopt the new position in May at the annual meeting of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors, an organization that sets uniform standards for participating journals. The Washington Post last month reported the journals' intention to adopt the new policy.

In recent years, funding for studies to test new drugs, vaccines and devices has increasingly come from industry rather than the federal government. As the cost of developing new products has grown, companies have tightened their control over every aspect of the research they sponsor.

Academic researchers "are extremely dependent on industry sponsorship," Horton said. Un-

der the new policy, journals "will routinely require authors to disclose details of their own and the sponsor's role in the study," the editorial states. "Many of us will ask the responsible author to sign a statement indicating that he or she accepts full responsibility for the conduct of the trial, had access to the data, and controlled the decision to publish."

Sponsors of studies should be able to review a manuscript only for a limited time — 30 to 60 days — before allowing it to be published and should not be able to suppress aspects of a study that are detrimental to their products, according to the editorial. In the past, companies have blocked publication of unfavorable findings or delayed it for years.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Report: Arsenic levels in water must be reduced

Bush had suspended strict limits; pressure's on now for tougher rules

BY KATHARINE Q. SEELYE
New York Times

WASHINGTON — The National Academy of Sciences has concluded that arsenic is so dangerous in drinking water that stringent levels set by the Clinton administration and later suspended by the Bush White House were justified but perhaps not strict enough.

Details of a report by the academy that were made available Monday night by government officials give the Bush administration little latitude in which to maneuver on this sensitive issue, one that even President Bush has acknowledged was a public relations disaster for his administration.

For decades, the Environmental Protection Agency set an acceptable arsenic level of 50 parts per billion in drinking water. But recent studies suggested that this level was too high and increased the risk of bladder and lung cancer.

A report by the National Academy of Sciences in 1999 said the standard should be made stricter "as promptly as possible." President Bill Clinton ordered the limit to be lowered to 10 parts per billion in 2006.

The Bush administration suspended the Clinton ruling on

March 20, drawing a wave of protest that it was more sympathetic to the chemical industry than to consumers. Officials said they were re-evaluating the levels and would wait for the new report by the academy before determining whether to set the level at 3 parts per billion, or 5, 10 or 20.

A senior administration official said Monday night that the report found an increased risk of cancer if the level was above 10 parts per billion.

The officials said that Christie Whitman, the administrator of the EPA, would make a ruling by February.

By signaling that a prudent level might be lower than 10, the report, which was based on a review of 300 recent arsenic studies, will put enormous pressure on the administration to stay at that level or below.

"It boxes them in," said Joan Mulhern, legislative counsel for the Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund. "With the public and the Hill, there is tremendous political pressure already to adopt the standard of 10 or something more strict. If this is what the National Academy is saying, it pretty much closes the door on the administration doing anything higher than 10."

The House passed a bill earlier this year saying the limit should be no higher than 10. The Senate did not specify a number but said that the administration needed to set a standard immediately that protected sensitive populations like children and the elderly.

5 SLAIN IN SACRAMENTO

Slaying suspect shoots self during gun battle

In video suicide note, man brags of putting on show in killing spree

BY DON THOMPSON
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — A former security guard wanted in the slayings of five people shot himself to death during a furious gun battle with police early Monday, leaving a video suicide note boasting that he had "put on a hell of a show."



Ferguson

evacuate Ferguson's co-workers from their homes for their own safety.

It was the second killing spree in Sacramento in three weeks. Late last month, a Ukrainian immigrant allegedly stabbed to death his pregnant wife and five relatives, then vanished for 10 days before he was captured. Charlotte police feared the Ukrainian suspect, Nikolay Solty, could be headed to Charlotte because he has more than 20 relatives in the area.

Authorities say Ferguson began killing people Saturday night because he was despondent over getting suspended from his supervisor's job at Burns Security a week earlier. He was suspended after his ex-girlfriend, Burns guard Nina Susu, said he vandalized her car after their breakup. She and another former co-worker were the first to die, shot as they worked at a city maintenance yard. As the manhunt spread, some 1,500 employees across Northern California were told to stay home from work Sunday for their protection.

By then, authorities say, Ferguson had holed up in the home of a Burns supervisor. He made the video there Sunday.

"I put on a hell of a show," Ferguson said on the tape.

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