

**THE FEDERATION OF
BEHAVIORAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL,
AND COGNITIVE SCIENCES**

FBPCS

Contact: Jill Egeth, PhD

The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences
Phone 202.336.5922
jegeth@fbpcs.org

The Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences is a non-profit coalition representing the interests of scientists involved in behavioral research. The Federation is supported by professional societies, university departments, regional associations, and research centers.

Press Release

Federation Statement in Support of NIH Peer Review Process

Washington, DC, October 31, 2003: *Federation of Behavioral, Psychological, and Cognitive Sciences'* Public Policy Analyst Jill Egeth, PhD, released the following statement today in response to recent concerns over ideological interference with the NIH peer review process:

The Federation has grave concerns about a potential threat to the internationally renowned National Institutes of Health (NIH) peer review system via the intrusion of ideology into the scientific process. The names of 157 peer-reviewed, NIH-funded researchers have appeared on a list put together by a religious coalition and then circulated in Congress and at NIH. These researchers are conducting important research on sexual behaviors, HIV/AIDS transmission, contraceptive use, and risk-taking behavior. The results of these studies could have an enormous and positive impact on the public health of the nation, but are being called into question because a small number of ideologues cannot perceive their utility, and in fact seem to think that the topic of human sexuality should not be the subject of scientific inquiry at all.

Sexual behavior *is* a legitimate subject for scientific research, with both economic and societal consequences. For example, many of the studies on the list are examining "safe sex" behaviors. If we can learn how to effectively encourage safer decisions about sex, then rates of HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, sexual violence, and unwanted pregnancies could all be reduced, simultaneously relieving the burden of personal suffering and saving the country incalculable amounts of money previously devoted to these public health concerns. Diminished research in these areas would lead to fewer interventions for promoting sexual health and responsible sexual behaviors, with severe public health consequences.

In addition to supporting research on sexual behaviors, the Federation also supports *all* funding decisions derived from the NIH peer review process. For a project to be funded by NIH, it must be of the highest scientific quality. Each project submitted to NIH is rated for excellence and relevance by a group of scientists who are qualified to judge its merit, and at most, only one-third of submitted proposals are accepted for funding under this rigorous merit review process. This review process has helped to make NIH one of the world's premier research institutions. However, the integrity of science is sacrificed when personal beliefs are introduced into the research process. Science is the quest for accurate information, not the propagation of one's own personal belief system. In the case of NIH, the public health of the nation is at stake, and should not be compromised by ideological and religious beliefs.

We appreciate Dr. Elias Zerhouni, the Director of NIH, and other senior officials at the Institutes for their continued and public support of the peer review process. We hope that their leadership will help guide the NIH in the right direction during this critical period.

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