

# PROBE

David Zimmerman's newsletter on science, media, policy and health.

Vol. II, No. 6

April 1, 1993, New York, NY

\$5

## New Ethics Plan May Quell Rage Over Genetic Violence Studies

A proposal is being brought to Congress this month that might help lift some of the political and ideological barriers that block scientific work. The plan is to set up a permanent national forum to assess controversial research initiatives so that those which meet ethical standards can be funded, and move forward.

The proposal, in brief, would establish a new, ongoing Ethical Advisory Board (EAB) within the federal government. This Board would evaluate proposals for studies on such contested topics as genetic precursors to violent behavior, AIDS vaccine trials on normal subjects, human fetal research, and studies on prisoners, pregnant women, children, and the cognitively impaired.

This plan for a permanent EAB — there have been *ad hoc* ones in the past — is being presented to the House-Senate conference on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Reauthorization Bill. The authors are two bioethicists with long experience in the Federal government. One is theologian John C. Fletcher, Ph.D., of the University of Virginia, NIH's first chief of bioethics. The other is political scientist Charles R. McCarthy, Ph.D., the retired head of NIH's Office of Protection from Research Risks.

A report by Congress's Office of Technological Assessment (OTA), due out this month, appears likely to support the proposal — or something close to it, according to Fletcher.

### Permanent Panel Sought

Previously, he explained last month, in a phone interview from Charlottesville, EABs were established, under federal law, to deal with specific issues, such as fetal research. But thus far, he said, there hasn't been "an ethics body that speaks to the nation" on a broader range of issues, as they arise. The proposed body's role, in Fletcher and McCarthy's view, would be to serve as an ongoing source of information, support, and guidance for the Federal government and for the public. (Most if not all federally funded research already is subject to ethical review, at the institution where the work is planned.)

The current white-hot controversy involves studies that might — or might not — link violence to genetic precursors. None of these studies looks at *race* as a correlate, proponents and oppo-

nents of the research agree — and no study has ever shown that one race has a greater proclivity to violence than any other. But critics charge that in America's "racist" society these genetic studies could nevertheless be used to develop drugs and other methods to subdue and control blacks and other minorities.

Supporters and critics of the genetics-and-violence studies also agree that violence among inner city residents, particularly blacks, is of critical concern.

### Correlations Emerge

Based on recent, provocative, and also persuasive research findings, scientists — including geneticists, biochemists, and psychiatrists — say they are beginning to find clear correlations between biochemical differences, some of which *may* be of genetic origin, and aggressive behaviors, including self-

continued on page 4

### *Freedom Imperiled*

"Since 1980 there has been a growing pattern of neglect of traditions of academic and scientific freedom, especially in Federal science and its funded research activities .... Federal science officials [are] far more concerned about criticism from Congress or special interest groups than about their vocation as scientists to protect and transmit the ethical traditions that, in the long run, can be trusted to conserve the values and practices of science and its relation to society.

"Most remarkable, in my view, and most costly, has been the dismantling and disappearance from public life of any national forum to review, study, debate, and recommend to the American people, its elected officials, and the scientific community sound principles and procedures to guide us in the midst of social and ethical controversies, especially ... in the field of human genetics."

— bioethicist John C. Fletcher, Ph.D., at AAAS



# Clinton Health Watch

**Tax On Smokes:** The best Washington health news we've heard recently is the plan to add a heavy new excise tax on cigarettes. A dollar a pack increase sounds right to us: enough to raise significant revenue and discourage many smokers, particularly kids, but perhaps not enough to stimulate an epidemic of cigarette smuggling from abroad. (Disclosure: We have done free-lance writing for a public relations company on a prescription product to aid smoking cessation.)

**Hillary's Big Plan:** We are waiting — with some trepidation — for the promised May 1 unveiling of the Administration's health plan. We see disquieting signs that, with hundreds of interest groups vying for attention, some significant fixes may already be in. Our main concern is that the essential element of health care — the relationship between patient and doctor — is going to be further bureaucratized and undermined.

The best idea we've seen was in a letter to the *New York Times* from a Boston physician. He pointed out that national health plans in Europe and other places have taken decades of building and tinkering. His suggestion was that instead of imposing a single, universal system, the Hillary Rodham Clinton team would do better if it sanctioned some local or state initiatives, as in Oregon, and thus provided a base for testing, comparing, and improving the various plans.

# # #

**Abortion:** *Roe v. Wade* now seems safe, given the certainty

## Counterprobe . . .

continued from preceding page

thing with my notes, they'd be out of there in a flash, and they wouldn't be rehired by anybody that I could call up."

This perspective has not been widely presented in the media — which is one reason for PROBE's interest in the case. But there is a much more important reason:

We think that equity is everybody's right — and David Baltimore, Robert Gallo, and other Dingell targets are not exceptions. We have pursued the issue of their rights — an unpopular cause — for precisely this reason.

Are we "boosters" for science? Well, yes ... *Not* for the Science Establishment, nor for any scientific group, institution, or belief. But for *science* as a (usually) rational, self-correcting process of discovery? Yes, by all means!

We are boosting a little more now than we would have projected at the start. We see science — and perhaps more important, its underpinning of *reason* — as presently endangered by a popular and powerful array of commercial and ideologic forces. They have become whipping boys for authoritarian leaders and irrationalist movements that we think are hazardous not just to science, but to political democracy, as well.

We are anti-ideology! We think that that's what scientists and journalists ought to be.

— D.R.Z.

that President Bill Clinton will not nominate a Pro-Life replacement for retiring associate justice Byron White.

Meanwhile, the FDA and others also are jawboning Hoescht A.G., and U.S. clinical tests on its RU-486 may be imminent. Moving early abortions, with RU-486, out of stand-alone clinics and into physicians' offices will remove the Pro-Life movement's most visible target. But it will leave the least-able-to-pay women with the fewest places to go, since many do not have private physicians.

The more immediate question is: What to do about Right-to-Life as some adherents become more desperate, violent, and deadly? The murder of gynecologist David Gunn, M.D., outside a Pensacola, Fla. clinic where he performed abortions, has brought this question to a head. The new U.S. Attorney General, Janet Reno, a Floridian, says her department will not try to pre-empt the state's proper jurisdiction in trying the self-confessed killer.

Stronger state and federal laws protecting abortion patients, providers, and clinics are being considered. Some Pro-Choice people in Washington have asked if a remedy to Pro-Life harassment might be found in the civil courts.

They are looking specifically at two civil cases won by the Southern Poverty Law Center, in Montgomery, Ala. It obtained huge judgments against the Klu Klux Klan, for killing a young black man in Mobile, and against California neo-Nazi Tom Metzger for a similar killing. As described in a new book, *Hate on Trial* (Villard, 1993), by the Center's director, Morris Dees, Metzger lost in civil court, and the jury handed down a \$12.5 million judgment — which crippled Metzger's racist White Aryan Resistance movement.

Might a similar case be brought against Rescue America and other anti-abortion groups involved with Gunn's killer, Michael Griffin?

The Center's legal director, J. Richard Cohen, said last month by phone, from Montgomery, that a parallel case is conceivable — but would hinge on police evidence in the criminal case, and the degree to which the Pro-Life organizations threatened violence and set Griffin on a course to commit it.

In the Klan and Metzger cases, he noted, he and his associates at the Center obtained direct, overwhelming evidence that the organizations were actively fomenting violence. This allowed them to tie the organizations to the crimes.

"The 'Wanted' posters," which showed Dr. Gunn's face, and listed his itineraries, "if that's all there is," Cohen said, "are not nearly enough. I'm confident about that."

On the other hand, he added, "if someone had threatened violence, or was likely to carry out violence, and you [as an organization] gave him information, and set his foot in that direction" — that might be enough to justify civil action.

Attorney Cohen said he has not learned enough about the Gunn case to say whether there might be grounds for a punitive civil action against Pro-Life organizations.

# # #

Pro Life likes to look to Scriptures for lessons. The one we think is relevant here, is *Hosea VIII, 7*:

"For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

# 'Serenic' Drugs Calm Aggression,

No drug is currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), or is even close to approval, for the specific purpose of calming aggressive behavior toward oneself or others. But some approved drugs are turning out to have just such an effect — and promising new research suggests that a whole new class of such agents can be developed.

These drugs are called *serenics*. Most act to raise the level of the neurotransmitter *serotonin* in the brain and other body tissues.

Serotonin is a natural body chemical derived from the essential amino acid *tryptophan*, obtained in food. Turkey meat is one of the richest dietary sources.

## New Agent Approved

Serotonin's biochemical role is quite complex, and there are several forms of it in the body. One, called 5-HT<sub>1D</sub>, constricts small arteries leading to the brain. It has been shown to be very effective in relieving migraine headaches; under the drug name *sumatriptan* (*Imitrex*, Glaxo), 5-HT<sub>1D</sub> became available in the United States this week as a prescription drug.

Serotonin's role in aggression and im-

pulsivity first was discerned in the late 1970s by psychiatrist Gerald L. Brown, M.D., who now is the clinical chief of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), in Rockville, Md. He showed that impulsive individuals tend to have lower serotonin levels in their brains — as measured by serotonic breakdown products found in their cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) — than other people. The CSF is obtained through *spinal taps* (lumbar puncture).

Subsequently, hundreds, perhaps thousands of studies conducted on animals and on human volunteers have confirmed, and begun to clarify the link between serotonin and behavior. Several psychiatric drugs that raise serotonin levels, called *serotonin agonists*, have come on the market, including *clozapine* (*Clozaril*, Sandoz), *fluoxetine* (*Prozac*, Dista), and *bupirone* (*BuSpar*, Mead). None has a specific FDA-approved *indication*, or use, for quelling aggressivity or impulsivity. Nevertheless, as one clinical investigator, Harvard psychiatrist John J. Ratey, M.D., writes in a recent review paper:

"Serotonin agonists have been widely studied, and the results seem to indicate

that they may be useful in controlling aggressive behavior."

## Effects Described

Dr. Ratey, who is research director of Medfield State Hospital, near Boston, has found, for example, that even very small doses of *bupirone*, can have a major anti-aggressive effect on patients who beat their heads against the walls and furniture or attack other patients and staff members (PROBE, Jan.). Ratey adds that serotonin agonists are far less debilitating and deadening to the mind than the tranquilizing drugs, called *neuroleptics*, that now are used routinely — along with strait jackets — to restrain these patients.

He cites these experimental examples of serotonergic serenics' efficacy:

- *Fluoxetine*, which holds serotonin in the intercellular space — which is where it is active — has been found to reduce impulsive aggression in patients with severe personality disorders, and it also reduces depressive and impulsive symptoms in patients with borderline personality disorders.

- *Bupirone*, added to a retarded woman's diet, decreased her aggressive

## Charge & Denial

"[T]he major funding thrust of the mental health establishment in 1994 is to identify supposedly biochemical and supposedly genetic factors in violence in the inner city, and to identify little children between . . . ages 5 [and] 9 . . . who are supposedly defective and violence prone, for early identification, [and] for early treatment. [This] would include incarceration, medication, or whatever else the mental health establishment was experimenting with."

— Peter Breggin, M.D. (WMMJ-FM, June 17, 1992)

"In fact, no National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) violence research being planned or conducted is premised on racial considerations, or targeted to any group on the basis of race. In fact, as a research institute, NIMH does not conduct broad-based programs to screen children for behavior problems, or to intervene when such problems are ascertained by parents, teachers or . . . caretakers to exist."

— Louis Sullivan, M.D., HHS secretary (in letter, Oct. 13, to WJLA, which also aired Breggin charge)

## Ethics . . .

continued from page 1

inflicted injury and injury to others. In a study on white, impulsive, criminal offenders in Finland, federal researchers linked a biochemical marker — high levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin in the brain — to a genetic variant on human chromosome 11 (See story, above).

This line of research has prompted speculation that serotonin levels might be used as an early warning sign for aggressive and/or violent behavior. It also suggests that modulation of serotonin levels, which already is a widely accepted therapy for other conditions, might forestall some violent behavior.

## Danger Is Seen

These possibilities, and the prospects of studying them, or even discussing whether and how to conduct such research under federal auspices, have prompted two groups to raise the red flag. They have questioned violence research initiatives within the Federal government. They also have caused the cancellation, at least temporarily, of an NIH-supported confer-

continued on next page

# And Might Curb Violent Behavior

behavior by 85%. "Buspirone reduces aggressiveness and eliminates injurious assaultiveness specifically when these maladaptive behaviors are associated with significant over-arousal and anxiety," Dr. Ratey says.

- Dietary supplements with serotonin-rich foods "dramatically decreased rates of self-hitting" in an adult patient with Down's syndrome, a genetic illness.

- Diets rich in tryptophan reduced aggression in developmentally disabled persons.

"Understanding the experience that is causing an aggressive outburst is the first step in attempting to treat it," the Harvard psychiatrist says. In his view, impulsive or aggressive behavior reflects frustration from irrelevant "noise" that normal people are able to filter out of their mental processes. Other people — because of brain damage, mental illness, perceptual impairment or related difficulties — are unable to cope with this "noise", which can be internally generated, or can come from outside:

Stimulus overloading from the environment, particularly when stimuli

are unpredictable or uncontrollable, can produce internal chaos, personal distortions, impulsive actions, impaired functioning, and increased physiological stress. [It] can, in general, lead to a lower level of adaptation and various states of psychopathology. Aggression can be seen as a product of stimulus overload and dysregulation ...

What has not been clear is what role, if any, genetics plays in the aggressive and impulsive behaviors that have been linked to low serotonin levels in the brain. An NIAAA study of white, impulsive,

## Scrutiny Invited

"One of the things about this whole controversial area is that people who work in it not only must do the best possible science, but they also have to open themselves to any kind of ethical scrutiny," says NIAAA's Dr. Brown.

He added, by phone:

"It's very important that we operate in a completely open and ethical way."

Finnish criminal offenders, which has just been submitted to a major international research journal, may begin to provide an answer.

A preliminary report on this study was presented at last year's American Psychiatric Association meeting by NIAAA neuroscientist David A. Nielsen, Ph.D., and several colleagues. They found a variation (polymorphism) in a gene, on chromosome 11, that codes for production of the enzyme *tryptophan hydroxylase*. This enzyme limits the rate at which tryptophan is converted into serotonin in the body.

Individuals with one of the genetic variants tend to have higher levels of serotonin — as measured by its breakdown products in CSF — than those with the other variant. The more impulsive prisoners tended to have lower serotonin levels. Those who had two copies of one of the variants (homozygosity) had the lowest levels of serotonin; those who had two copies of the other variant had the highest levels of this neurotransmitter.

Whether, and if so how this very preliminary research finding pertains to pre-continued on next page

ence at the University of Maryland at College Park that was to have explored the prospects and probity of conducting such genes-and-violence studies.

The leading foes of these studies are Ronald Walters, Ph.D., chairman of political science at Howard University, in Washington, D.C., who is black, and psychiatrist Peter Breggin, M.D., of Bethesda, Md., who is an adamant, long-time foe of biological research and drug therapy for mental illness. Both men have branded as "racist" a federal public health initiative on violence, the University of Maryland conference, and some research, researchers, and ideas associated with these studies (See Box, p. 4).

Walters and Breggin have stirred and stimulated widening fear in the black community, particularly the Congressional Black Caucus and community leaders in Washington. The violence research initiatives carry the "presumed threat," in Walters' words, of "biologically alter[ing]" the behavior of young black men, denying them the aggressivity that they need for survival in a hostile society. Dr. Breggin has stirred similar concern among his constituency, who fear that psychiatry and

society are developing new, chemical, strait jackets to deny mental patients their freedom.

In their attacks, the two leaders have tapped a far wider public concern that geneticists, in searching for innate behavioral determinants, are set on destroying human freedom and free will by announcing a new, hereditary — and hence inescapable — predeterminism.

No credible evidence has been adduced to support any of these charges. Yet they resonate in many people's fears.

## Blue Ribbon Panel Meets

Based on these fears, and alleged racist statements and actions by federal health officials, the Bush administration's Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), Louis Sullivan, M.D., convened a blue ribbon panel on violence prevention late last year "to discuss concerns expressed in the African American community about the [HHS] Department's ongoing and proposed violence-related prevention and research activities." The panel was chaired by Howard University President Franklyn

continued on page 7

# Genetics Research May Be a Key To Blacks' Roots

The attack on genetic research, and even on the Human Genome Project, by political scientist Ronald Walters and other black leaders is ironic. Reason: Blacks may become major personal consumers of information that this research yields.

Many black Americans have a deep longing to rediscover their African heritage. "[B]ecause the white man had completely erased the slaves' past,"

## Books & Ideas

Malcolm X says in his *Autobiography*, "a Negro in America can never know his true family name,

or even what tribe he was descended from: the Mandingos, the Wolof, ... the Ashanti, or others."

This void, and the urge to fill it, sent Malcolm's as-told-to collaborator, journalist Alex Haley, on a quest for his own personal "roots." The discovery of his family lineage, back to an African man named Kunta Kinte — who Haley said was captured and shipped to Maryland as a slave in 1767 — created a powerful emotional catharsis among black Americans, and also whites, when Haley published *Roots* as a book, in 1976, and it was presented on TV.

Unfortunately, *Roots* was a hoax. This has long been suspected to be so in literary circles in New York; Haley even hints at this possibility in his text.

## Hoax Is Documented

Now, a year after his death, a major exposé by journalist Philip Nobile in the *Village Voice* (Feb. 23) documents Haley's dishonesty. "Overwhelming evidence — from interviews with scholars and surviving associates, along with a review of Haley's private papers ... confirms that Haley invented 200 years of family history," Nobile reports.

Haley's family of course denies this. But a new Haley historical TV epoch recently was reclassified from nonfiction to fiction — suggesting that Haley's sad but remunerative dishonesty is no longer open to question.

Left in the lurch are millions of other black Americans who

looked to Haley's search for his African ancestors as a symbolic fulfillment of their own longing for roots. Whether some will eventually establish genealogies that go back to Africa is yet to be seen. Most probably won't. The genealogic record, as Malcolm said, has been cruelly destroyed.

## New Route Suggested

But there is another route to one's roots. It won't yield names. But it may well tell many blacks the tribes and the locations of their African ancestors: This source, of course, is genetics, and particularly genomic research.

Every person has genetic variations (polymorphisms) that he or she shares with some other relatives and forebears. Some of these genetic markers can be traced with a fair degree of certainty to ancestral populations elsewhere.

"There's lots of interest in understanding the evolution of different ethnic groups and their genetic roots," Howard University medical geneticist Robert F. Murray, Jr., M.D., said recently by phone from Washington, D.C. Dr. Murray, who is co-author (with James Bowman, M.D.) of a book, *Genetic Variation and Disorders in People of African Origin* (Johns Hopkins: 1990), said that genetic material (DNA) and other biological traits can be used to make "a sort of a genetic link-up" between black Americans and tribal groups and sites in Africa.

## Diversity Being Studied

One current project at Howard, Dr. Murray noted, is to study the genetic diversity of American blacks, and determine how strongly the different African tribal groups are represented here.

The main value of the genomic profiles that are being developed for population groups in Africa, and elsewhere, is to study inherited diseases and also varying innate susceptibilities to infectious illnesses such as measles, Dr. Murray said. But the data can be used for tracing roots as well.

"If somebody really wanted to do that, they could take genetic markers from various tribal groups, and compare them with their own markers or those of other people in their families," he said.

Currently, he noted, these tests cost several hundred dollars. But they may become less expensive as this information becomes available in convenient data-retrieval systems.

# # #

In short, black people, like everybody else, may discover significant benefit in genetic studies.

## 'Serenic' ...

continued from preceding page  
dicting and preventing violent behavior  
is wholly unclear.

# # #

Could government officials coerce parents into having their children's serotonin levels tested at an early age, and then force those who have very low levels of this neurotransmitter to take a "serenic"

drug — or eat turkey sandwiches?

This is what political scientist and political activist Ronald Walters, Ph.D. of Howard University, fears (See main story). This also is one of the questions scheduled for discussion at the University of Maryland conference that Walters and others have thus far kept from happening.

Researchers and federal health offi-

cialists are tight-lipped on the matter, saying they do not want to fan the controversy.

But psychiatrist Brown, of NIAAA, whose research started it all, did say recently:

"I do not know what kind of practical benefits might result from this research. But I think being ignorant is never a solution."

# Ethics . . .

continued from page 5

G. Jenifer, and was made up of blacks and other minorities, including Ronald Walters.

"After a detailed review of relevant HHS programs and activities," the panel said in its report, released in February, "we found no specific evidence that HHS was conducting what had been alleged as inappropriate research."

Walters was the only dissenter.

A few days later, in Boston, in a press conference at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Walters said the statement on HHS and the researchers it supports was "far too strong" in exculpating the studies. He complained that inappropriate "genetic-oriented research was going on."

Questioned by reporters, Walters said that he considered genetics-and-violence studies "a clear and present danger to the African-American community." He indicated that it was not likely that he would condone any such studies, even in white people, because "regardless of what you've got in that population," the question is where is the anti-violence effort going to be made?

It will be in the black community.

## Initiative Called Racist

"They're not going to go out in the suburbs and try to examine somebody's genetic structure and intervene with their children by the age of five," Walters charged. "That's not how politics works in a society that's racist."

Reacting sharply at the AAAS press conference to the Breggin-Walters attack on the University of Maryland, ethicist John Fletcher asked, rhetorically, "whether equal consideration was given to the cost of infringing on opportunities for debate, and the appearance of violating academic freedom."

"The decision was made [by NIH] in the midst of controversy, without study by an advisory body .... If forums for serious debate and conflict resolutions are denied or disabled," Fletcher warned, "the creative potential of controversies are lost, and little remains but helpless anger and resultant cynicism."

## Errors Cited

The NIH vehemently denies that it withheld the funding, forcing the conference's postponement or cancellation, on political grounds. Rather, NIH official John W. Diggs, Jr., told the university that the sponsors erred in listing NIH as a conference "co-sponsor" and erred grievously in an insensitive brochure which suggested that environmental efforts to stem crime have failed. Diggs said the brochure then went on to "tout" a potentially dangerous genetic approach to crime (See Box).

NIH's position now is that the University of Maryland will "have to go back through peer review" to obtain the funding, NIH spokeswoman R. Anne Thomas said last month by phone.

But the conference organizer, attorney David Wasserman of the university's Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy,

hotly denied that the NIH funding grant would or should be re-reviewed.

## Peer Review Cited

"The thread that runs through this is the avoidance of political disputes," he said last month by phone. "We regard them [NIH] as morally and legally committed to holding the conference as approved, and would regard any suggestion that we re-submit the conference for re-review as a denigration of the peer review process."

He said the university and NIH are negotiating on the proposal; he hopes that eventually the agency will "renew their commitment."

More broadly, NIH has decided to convene an *ad hoc* EAB on the specific issue of research on anti-social, aggressive, and violence-related behaviors, and their consequences. The panel hopes to assess these studies and restore public confidence in NIH's research programs on them.

"Part of the reason why we're doing this is because there is so much confusion among the public about what kind of research we're trying to do here," Thomas said. She said NIH hopes to convene this EAB before cardiologist Bernadine Healy, M.D., who has resigned as NIH director, leaves on June 30.

## EAB Needs Respect

Bioethicist Fletcher acknowledged at AAAS that genetics studies — and not just on violence — have become a "taboo-like" subject for many people, a part of the cultural war that has divided the nation over the last decade on issues such as abortion. The scientific issues have gotten stuck to social and ethical issues, he said, causing the current conflict and resultant research gridlock. But, Fletcher declared:

"These scientific issues are inherently separable and re-

continued on next page

## PROBE Quiz:

### Is This Racist?

The following passage, from a University of Maryland conference announcement, angered black leaders, and led NIH to charge that the brochure "touts" what may be a dangerous genetic approach to crime:

"[G]enetic research ... gains impetus from the apparent failure of environmental approaches to crime — deterrence, diversion, and rehabilitation — to affect the dramatic increases in crime, especially violent crime, that this country has experienced over the past 30 years. Genetic research holds out the prospect of identifying individuals who may be predisposed to certain kinds of criminal conduct, of isolating environmental features which trigger these predispositions, and of treating some predisposition with drugs and unintrusive therapies."

Elsewhere, the brochure lists this conference topic:

"Intervention and treatment: Can drug therapy ever be benign? To whom should it be offered, on whom should it be imposed?"

# Ethics . . .

continued from preceding page

searchable in themselves, and can be identified as such."

This optimistic view animates the EAB proposal he and Dr. McCarthy are offering Congress this month.

"There needs to be an EAB," he said later by phone, "in a location that can protect it from political manipulations . . ."

This EAB should be insulated from Congress, Fletcher said. It should include scientists, physicians, attorneys, ethicists, philosophers, theologians, social scientists and members of the lay public who do not represent any particular profession. Both orthodox and progressive points of view should be represented, he added. But he would "try to avoid having people who are single-issue individuals" or zealots.

Fletcher said that he and McCarthy are the two main advo-

cates for this approach at present. But, he added, Congress's Office of Technological Assessment (OTA) is preparing to issue a report that analyzes the future need for bioethical review bodies. He said his "guess" is that the OTA will recommend an EAB along the lines he and McCarthy are proposing.

An OTA official declined to comment.

Fletcher was asked if officials at NIH would support such a proposal.

"I don't know," he said. "I know that there are leaders there who support this."

Asked if the Clinton administration has a position on EABs, he replied:

"I don't think they've had time to focus on research ethics."

He added:

"We'll have to see whether the powers that be want this to happen."

## Special Charter Subscription Offer for PROBE

You are cordially invited to reserve your charter subscription to PROBE, the new, critical, wholly-independent newsletter of science and medicine. PROBE will publish investigative articles, analyses, and interpret developments of science and technology. It will explore their links to public policy and personal health.

**YES**, count me among those who support independent medical and scientific reporting. Enter my one-year subscription to PROBE at the special charter publication price of \$53.

My check for \$53 is enclosed. Please add a bonus extra month to my subscription.

Please bill me \$53.

Fill out this form and mail it today:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
David Zimmerman, Inc. — PROBE  
Box 1321, Cathedral Station  
New York, New York 10025

**PROBE**

Box 1321  
Cathedral Station  
New York, New York 10025

First Class Mail