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Paris, October 25th, 1983.

Dr. NEWMARK
Deputy Editor
NATURE
Macmillan Journals Ltd.
4 Little Essex Street
London WC2 R 3LF
E N G L A N D

Y/Ref. : MO7318 NW/JAC

Dear Dr. Newmark,

I deeply regret your decision taken after two months not to publish the paper quoted in reference, without waiting for our reply to the referees' comments. For the sake of progress in Science, I should be much obliged if you would transmit the following reply to each referee concerned.

In addition, we have now repeated similar experiments from *in vivo* infected blood lymphocytes taken from patients at risk of AIDS : here also, only OKT4$^+$ cells produce the virus upon culture.

Enclosed, for your information, a preprint of a paper in press elsewhere. It shows clearly that the "Paris Virus" is not a laboratory accident.

Sincerely yours,

L. Montagnier

Dr. L. Montagnier

Encl.

REPLY TO REFEREE 1. :

This referee does not actually criticize the work described in our manuscript, but he is questionning the work previously published in "Science" (Ref. 220, 868-871) on the isolation of a new retrovirus, the "Paris Virus", as he calls it with a touch of contempt.

We agree with the referee that this virus is not HTLV1. This was already apparent from the lack of homology of the major core proteins described in our Science's paper. Since the writing of the present manuscript, we have brought stronger evidence that it is a new retrovirus and this will be published shortly elsewhere. We agree to make a stronger point of this in the referred manuscript.

Concerning the possibility of a laboratory contamination, we are not that naïve to the stage of not having considered it before submitting our work to "Science".

This was very unlikely, since no animal retrovirus was handled in the author's laboratory when the virus was isolated from human material. Besides, the patient from which we isolated the virus, has antibodies against its own virus ! Since then, -and we were ready to add this information in the present manuscript-, we have found that a number of patients with AIDS or at risk of AIDS had also specific antibodies against the P25 protein of the same virus, and similar viruses have been isolated from several cases of authentic AIDS.

But the presence of antibodies in the patients' serum was already made clear in our "Science's" paper, as well as the fact that the virus could not be grown in cells usually appropriate to grow xenotropic and ecotropic murine viruses, including mink cells.

We are tempted to conclude that the referee has not carefully read our "Science's" paper, and that he has some difficulties in admitting that a new virus possibly involved in AIDS, be discovered in places other than Bethesda or Boston.

REPLY TO REFEREE 2. :

Point 1/ - Table 2 demonstrates significant RT activity at two points (days 9 and 13) and not only one. We agree that the complete kinetic's results of the virus production were not shown in this paper, since they were similar to that published earlier on unfractionated cultures in our Science's paper.
We have now more experiments with detailed kinetics, and which can be added to the present paper.
For OKT8 cells, it was pointed out in the text that this fraction was followed up for 6 weeks.

Point 2/ - Cell concentration was measured every 6 days, at the time of complete medium change (partial change every 3 days). We did not mention such data, which shows clearly that proliferation of both of the T cell subsets were comparable. We can provide a figure for this.

Point 3/ - The percentage of virus infected cells determined by immunofluorescence is mentioned in page 3.

Point 4/ - Virus was produced by lymphocytes from an healthy adult donor and not from cord lymphocytes.
The virus was removed 3 days after infection by centrifuging the cells (legend of Table 2). It is unlikely that traces of lymphokines could affect the cells during all the time of the culture. The percentages of $OKT4^+$ and $OKT8^+$ cells were not affected significantly during the culture (Table 1).

Point 5/ - We agree to replace "All" by "most".