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December 27, 1989

Dr. Francois Barre-Sinoussi
Institut Pasteur
25 Rue du Docteur Roux
75724 Paris CEDEX 15, France

Dear Francois:

I am writing to you to seek a clarification. About five weeks ago a very strangely nasty, highly inaccurate article was published in a Chicago newspaper. The article died on publication, but quite oddly was picked up by the Paris newspapers, among all the world, only the Paris newspapers. The article is filled with breeches of our agreement. That is, once again there are quotes from you and Jean-Claude over old debates. Of course, the article was designed to harm me, and is a one-sided libelous attack.

I specifically want to know if it is true that you said that I wrote your abstract, and you were shocked by this, etc. The truth is that Montagnier asked for my help because he (or you) forgot to send in an abstract. The truth is that we wrote it together, i.e., we discussed every sentence by telephone, and he agreed with all of them. Also, obviously, he had his own contacts with the editor, and he had the galley proofs to correct yourself. Of course, as a reviewer, I am supposed to suggest. Furthermore, your own data clearly argued that it was a new virus but a member of the HTLV family. Let me remind you it was your data which stated:

- (1) It was a typical type-C retrovirus (in other words, the same virus type as an HTLV. Clearly, you did not believe it was a lenti-retrovirus.
- (2) It has a major core protein of 24-25,000 daltons. No retrovirus major core protein was that small -- only the HTLVs.
- (3) Your conditions for reverse transcriptase assay were identical (even buffer concentrations) to that we described for HTLV-I in 1980. Obviously, these conditions vary enormously from virus to virus. How could I know you never optimized the conditions for LAV?
- (4) You described the virus as a new Human T Lymphotropic

- (5) You got it to temporarily grow with my protocol for transferring HTLV-I or II to umbilical cord blood T cells.

No viruses other than HTLVs were known to do this.

- (6) Last but not least, you erroneously reported a one way immunological cross reaction with HTLV-I.

Now by anyone's criteria these characteristics would obviously suggest that you had a new retrovirus -- but clearly a member of the HTLV family. Since the period was April-May 1983 and the only human retroviruses known belonged to this family, my suggestion to Montagnier was simply, why not call a spade a spade? Six years later I am given hostile treatment in a U.S. newspaper by you for this.

Is this true? If not, how did he get the quote? If it is not true, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,



Robert C. Gallo