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Dear Jay,

I heard from a newsperson that you told them to ask me if HTLV causes AIDS, why isn't there T-cell malignancies, rather B-cell? (A reasonable question).

My reply:

1. I never said HTLV caused AIDS.
2. From the beginning I have said we are testing the idea that a human T-lymphotropic retrovirus is involved. In short, we are looking for HTLV "relatives" and variants of which we now have several types isolated. All of them are human (H) T-Lymphotropic (L) viruses. All have common polymerase T4 specificity and certain other common features, including the isolate from Paris.
3. HTLV itself, nonetheless, could still cause AIDS. The T-cell malignancy argument has no validity since the latency appears to be from 5 years to over 40 years and since only 1 in every 80 infected people get leukemia.
4. The B-cell malignancies seem to me to be secondary to T-cell immune suppression.

I think a HTLV variant is the best bet for a primary cause of AIDS.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Gallo, M.D.  
Chief, Laboratory of Tumor Cell Biology

RG/smd