

August 2, 1985

Dr. Robert Gallo  
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Dear Bob:

Your letter of 26 July was very disappointing. I hardly need to be reminded of your accomplishments since I have watched them with great interest and have played a role in assuring you receive proper credit including the national recognition that has come with the receipt of many prizes in the past three years. I believe that Dr. Montagnier would probably feel that he has been under recognized if one would look at scientific recognition in the form of prizes as an index of the scientific community's feeling about who has played a major role in the (HTLV-III) field.

I also find your comments about visible support, particularly for the intramural program, difficult to square with the long list of your accomplishments all of which have required a great deal of resources which have been supplied by the Institute. Your current budget, which approximates \$10 million including the support you receive from the Frederick Cancer Research Facility, is in far excess of the budget of any other laboratory let alone an individual in the United States and probably in Europe. This was not accomplished by the use of mirrors or marked cards but rather hard decisions about reallocation of resources to the person(s) who could use them most appropriately. No matter what you say in your letter and how outrageous your comments, none of us regret having made these decisions because we value scientific acumen a great deal.

We are, however, concerned about your constant contact with the press and your feelings that somehow or other you can deal with them and convince them that you and only you should receive the credit for the work that is going on in AIDS, and that such a debate will settle the (issue) of (credit) between (French) and (American) scientists. I think you have to bear a large responsibility for the poor public image that your laboratory seems to have. By emphasizing differences between scientists rather than your accomplishments and your scientific judgment, you provide copy for the press that they just can't resist using.

Your letter was apparently precipitated by the news stories associated with Rock Hudson's visit to Paris to go on HPA-23. Rock Hudson, of course, could have stayed in the United States and receive suramin which is indeed, in our view, a better drug than HPA-23. You must recognize, of course, that Rock Hudson is an individual and did not have to call us and ask for permission to go to Paris. We have to consider that he may not have been aware of the fact that there are other alternatives here in the United States because we are not in the habit of using the newspapers to publish the results of our clinical trials.

I believe the French did not handle this properly and, subsequent events lead me to believe that the luring of patients to Paris has caused them some concern, and thus, their public pronouncements that HPA-23 is not the answer to AIDS. We have had an opportunity to discuss this with the Secretary and she is fully aware of the fact that our drug development and clinical trials program is by far, and away, the most advanced of its kind.

Bob, I am afraid you just don't have the bigger picture. My feeling about this is reinforced by the fact that your comments about the NIAID are, in my view, inappropriate. The only way a solution to the AIDS problem can be reached is if the two institutes work together to develop drugs and vaccines, and to conduct clinical trials. Considerable effort has gone into such a joint program which is now reaching fruition. This will allow us to expand both the drug development and clinical trials efforts. You could not be reasonably expected to be aware of this since clinical treatment of AIDS is not necessarily your area of responsibility. The fact that you might not be aware of all the information does not seem to inhibit your outbursts and criticisms. Bruce has been heavily involved in this effort and I believe your comment about him being uninterested is unfair. You seem to want the Cancer Institute to take the position of running with the ball at the expense of the proper management of resources. I won't do that and I will publicly disavow any attempt on the part of NCI scientists to interrupt the proper collaborative efforts amongst the institutes at the NIH and scientists anywhere in the world.

Secretary Heckler gave AIDS research her highest priority and so have those at the NIH responsible for AIDS research. We have other priorities in the Cancer Institute, as well, which cannot be totally neglected. I don't have to be told that AIDS is an important problem. I know that AIDS has reached epidemic proportions and I don't have to be told that either. I also know that one cannot ask branch chiefs to coordinate a nationwide effort and have it run successfully and that is why I don't believe your suggestion that you should run all the scientific programs of the Institute are realistic, unless you are willing to resign your position as

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branch chief and take on a different role. Peter Fischinger has been and will remain NCI's person on AIDS research. Peter is assuming a position closer to my office than his past position and he and I will be sure that the Institute's resources which are as powerful and important as you indicated, are focused on AIDS to the best of our ability.

Finally, we have worked together for many years and have had many interesting debates on scientific issues, and the management and organization of the Institute, including the establishment of the Biologic Response Modifiers Program. Your comments in reference to the latter are unfair because your knowledge of the reasons for the establishment of that program and its current status and aims are, at the very least, outdated. It has been my experience that critics often attack other programs in order to get resources into their own. I abhor this practice wherever I have seen it and I abhor it when you use it the way you did in your letter. You and I have never needed letters and memos to communicate. My door is always open and I have never denied you access to my office. I hope you, Peter, and I can sit down and discuss this issue under more appropriate circumstances.

Sincerely yours,

Vincent T. DeVita, Jr., M.D.  
Director  
National Cancer Institute