



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20857

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Stephen Barrett, M.D.
Chairman, Board of Directors
Lehigh Valley Committee Against
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P.O. Box 1602
Allentown, Pennsylvania 18105

Dear Dr. Barrett:

Thank you for your letter of May 12, 1977, regarding the Parade article on Dr. J. A. Morris.

I am sure you can appreciate the difficulties inherent in trying to deal in a single letter with misrepresentations from a record so voluminous as that relating to Dr. J. A. Morris. For this reason, we would be happy to arrange for you to meet with the scientists managing the Bureau of Biologics at any time. These are the people who worked with Dr. Morris, who documented his failures, who proposed his separation from government, and who had the responsibility for presenting management's case in a procedural process which took more than two years to complete.

Before turning to your letter, you should be aware that the Agency's decision to fire Dr. Morris has just been upheld by the United States Civil Service Commission. The Commission's conclusions, which supported the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) action as fair and sound, were given in a decision dated June 3, 1977. It would be hard to suggest that the Commission's decision was other than objective since it was rendered after the change in administration. The Commission held extensive public hearings and over a period of months, reviewed all records pertinent to the case.

Why was Dr. Morris fired? He was fired because Dr. Harry M. Meyer, Jr., Director of the Bureau of Biologics, documented that Dr. Morris' research was so poorly conducted as to preclude drawing any valid conclusions from the results and that Dr. Morris was so insubordinate as to make it impossible to correct his deficiencies and monitor his work.

Was Dr. Meyer a bureaucrat that could not tolerate an independent scientist or one who bore a grudge against Dr. Morris as a result of old quarrels? This is hardly the case; Dr. Meyer is a distinguished virologist (CV enclosed) and had known Dr. Morris and had been his friend in earlier times for more than 20 years.

Dr. Morris and Mr. Turner, in fact, recommended that Dr. Meyer be made Director when the Bureau of Biologics was transferred from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to FDA in 1972, following the resignation of the former Director who had resigned after humiliation by Dr. Morris and Mr. Turner. It was Dr. Meyer who then provided Dr. Morris with facilities and support to give him the opportunity to do effective research.

Could Dr. Meyer have been unfair in deciding that Dr. Morris' work during this period of major support (1972-1975) was unacceptable? Not unless one is prepared to say that any research done by Dr. Morris is "golden" even if those expert in the field disagree. It should be recalled that the FDA expert Panel on Viral Vaccines and Rickettsial Vaccines conducted a total review of Dr. Morris' research projects (and all public health issues Dr. Morris felt deserved review) over a period of months in 1975. This review was conducted in public sessions and a complete transcript is part of the record. The expert Panel prepared a detailed report of its peer review and it was the unanimous view of the Panel that Dr. Morris' research was grossly unsatisfactory; (Panel Report with attachments enclosed).

Of course, Dr. Morris and Mr. Turner claimed the expert Panel was biased and part of the "vaccine lobby." It would be instructive to review the CV's of the Panel members and the expert consultants to the Panel who participated in the public review of Dr. Morris' program (see Panel Report attachments). Four Panel members, Drs. Krugman, Lennette, Jordan and Fox are distinguished senior scientists. While they have conducted research on vaccines, they would also be considered representative of the best that this country has produced in virology, immunology, epidemiology, medicine and pediatrics in the past 30 or so years. Three Panel members are experts from the younger generation (Drs. Parks, Osborn and McIntosh); two (Drs. Parks and Osborn) have never been engaged in vaccine research but are considered exceptional experts in basic virology in their fields of cancer viruses and slow viruses, respectively.

All of the Panel members were selected by a public nomination process approximately two years before they were asked to review Dr. Morris' research program. In fact, Dr. Wade Parks, the expert in viral oncology, was nominated for appointment to the Panel by Dr. Morris and Mr. Turner. It seems unlikely that Dr. Parks, Dr. Morris' nominee, an expert in viral oncology and a scientist who had never worked on vaccines, would be other than objective in his evaluation of Dr. Morris' findings that live attenuated influenza virus (ts-1 E) caused cancer in mice. Yet, the Panel Report and Dr. Parks' testimony at the Civil Service hearings make it clear that he considers Dr. Morris' experiment to be worthless.

When the National Cancer Institute did repeat Dr. Morris' ts-1 E experiment, not only did the live flu vaccine not cause cancer but the data collected demonstrated that the experiment could not have been conducted as Dr. Morris described. Yet, in spite of all of these facts, Cockburn & Ridgeway proclaimed

to the public that Dr. Morris "found that the live vaccine accelerated the growth of tumors in the test animals," thus "Morris' unpopularity among the health bureaucrats increased markedly." We in FDA deplore a situation in which a scientist who conducts a sloppy, uncontrolled, and nonreproducible experiment can be made into a folk hero by the press.

One of the most insidious insinuations in the Parade article and in the letter from the Parade editor is that phrase, "if Morris had had his say," Perhaps, somewhere in the bureaucracy, scientists do not have an opportunity to have their say, but certainly this does not apply to Dr. Morris. Since the Bureau of Biologics joined the FDA in July 1972, there have been numerous public meetings, workshops, and conferences (all open to the public) to discuss influenza vaccines and flu prevention. Dr. Morris attended most of these meetings; yet the record will show that he is almost invariably silent even when specifically invited to give his views. Public meetings with his scientific peers have never been his forum; he is effective only when closeted with those who are relatively uninformed, where there is no opportunity for rebuttal of his views. For example, Dr. Morris will, in private to Cockburn & Ridgeway, say that he "was convinced we had scientific evidence that flu vaccines did not work." Yet, when Secretary Califano held two public conferences in February and March 1977 to review such matters, Dr. Morris (who was present at both) said nothing, even though from the data presented and discussed it was the unanimous opinion of the Secretary's ad hoc groups that flu vaccines could be expected to be effective in preventing flu.

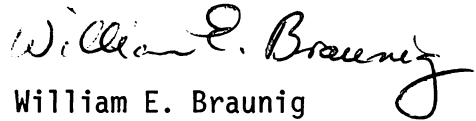
If you were to contact some of the outstanding science writers of today who are familiar with the Dr. Morris' situation, e.g., Victor Cohn and Tom O'Toole of the Washington Post, Harold Schmeck of the New York Times, Jonathan Spivak of the Wall Street Journal or Charles Marwick of Medical World News, you would find that none of these journalists has written articles sympathetic or supportive of Dr. Morris. Unfortunately, the authors of the Parade article apparently did not research their story adequately. For example, the Parade article makes the statement that, "Morris, who takes no unemployment insurance lives off his dwindling savings, refusing to accept lecture fees on the grounds they might be compromising." Actually Dr. Morris runs no financial risk; at the present time. He has applied for his retirement pay and will receive (or is receiving) all pay due him since the day of his dismissal in 1976. Moreover, he will continue to collect a monthly retirement check for the rest of his life. Furthermore, because he is entitled to government retirement pay (and because he was fired), he is not eligible for unemployment insurance.

As I mentioned earlier in this letter, the hearings conducted by the Civil Service Commission were open to the public; thus, the transcript of those hearings is available to the public. It is my understanding you have been sent a copy of the transcript under separate cover. The testimonies, under

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oath, of Drs. Meyer, Chanock, and Parks regarding Dr. Morris' experiments, serve to document many of the matters cited in this letter. I also reiterate our willingness for you to meet with appropriate people at the Bureau of Biologics. should you have further questions.

Sincerely yours,



William E. Braunig
Consumer Safety Officer
Office of Legislative Services

5 Enclosures

Report of Panel on Review of Viral Vaccines and Rickettsial Vaccines (5 volumes).

- a. submission of Report, June 27, 1975.
- b. Meetings of Panel - Pages 1 through 300.
- c. Meetings of Panel - Pages 301 through 651.
- d. Volume I - Exhibits 1 through 13.
- e. Volume II - Exhibits 14 through 34.

Summary Report on Influenza Virus Vaccine Use. Secretary Califano's Ad Hoc Conference held on February 7, 1977.

Summary Report of Conference on Influenza Vaccine Activity for 1977-78. Secretary Califano's Ad Hoc Conference held on March 21, 1977.

Scientist J. Anthony Morris - He Fought the Flu Shots and the U.S. Fired him by Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway. Parade, March 13, 1977.
Curriculum vitae - Harry M. Meyer, Jr., M.D.