



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Assistant Secretary for
Public Health Emergency Preparedness
Washington, D.C. 20201

May 27, 2005

Dr. Bruce Alberts
National Academy of Sciences
500 Fifth Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Dr. Alberts:

I write to express my concern about an article I understand is about to be published in Proceedings of the National Academies of Sciences. The article, "Analyzing a Bioterror Attack on the Food Supply: The Case of Botulinum Toxin in Milk" by Lawrence Wein and Yifan Liu, is a road map for terrorists and publication is not in the interests of the United States. My concern is focused on the specificity of the information contained in the manuscript.

The manuscript, which I received late yesterday afternoon, gives very detailed information on vulnerability nodes—in the "cow-to-consumer supply chain," including the entire distribution system of the milk supply. The manuscript also includes detailed information on the sequence of milk processing, very precise information on the dosage of botulinum toxin needed to contaminate the milk supply to kill or injure large numbers of people, and gives information about what the authors perceive as inadequacies in testing. The authors also discuss the applicability of their methods to other food commodities. It seems clear on its face that publication of this manuscript could have very serious public health and national security consequences. This opinion was expressed to Dr. Wein by a colleague of mine when the manuscript was being considered for publication in another journal.

My concern about the Wein manuscript is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the National Research Council report "Biotechnology Research in an Age of Terrorism." The authors of the report noted:

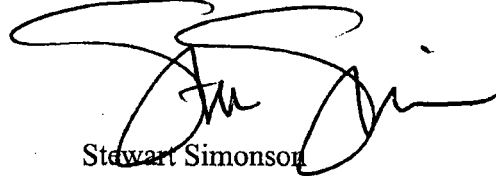
"We recognize that on occasions an editor may conclude that the potential harm of publication outweighs the potential societal benefits. Under such circumstances, the paper should be modified, or not be published...."

In the instant case, experts at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have concluded that the potential harm of publication of the Wein manuscript outweighs the potential societal benefits. Accordingly, I ask that you decline to publish "Analyzing a Bioterror Attack on the Food Supply: The Case of Botulinum Toxin in Milk."

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Dr. Lester Crawford, Acting Commissioner for Food and Drugs, joins me in this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stewart Simonson', written over a large, stylized flourish.

Stewart Simonson
Assistant Secretary

Copies: Dr. Lester Crawford
Dr. Robert Brackett
Dr. Stuart Nightingale