

AABT Supports the National Institutes of Health Peer Review Process

The Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy (AABT) strongly supports the scientific peer review system of the National Institutes of Health. Indeed, many of the NIH study sections have been, and continue to be staffed by AABT members. In light of our active involvement in the grant review process, AABT has grave concerns about reports that the names of 157 peer-reviewed NIH-funded researchers have appeared on a list generated by an ideologically-biased coalition and then circulated to congress and NIH with questions regarding the legitimacy of their research. These studies include research on sexual behaviors, HIV/AIDS transmission, contraceptive use, and substance abuse. This appears to be an attempt to censor researchers from examining questions regarding reproduction, sexually transmitted diseases, high risk behaviors, or substance use. The public health implications alone of restricting these lines of research are chilling. The objections raised about these studies appear to reflect objections to the behaviors or to the populations being studied. However, these problems cut across all segments of our society, across all ethnic backgrounds, income levels, and religious ideologies.

The only way to address these issues is through an unbiased health research agenda, soundly based on scientific principles. Therefore, AABT supports *all* funding decisions stemming from the NIH peer review process, without interference from other government agencies or ideological groups. Projects funded by NIH are of the highest scientific quality after being reviewed by a group of scientists qualified to judge its merit. The integrity of this process is compromised when personal ideologies are allowed to influence the scientific review.

It is the hope of AABT that our nation's leaders and the people of this country will step forward, in the interests of public health and the advancement of science, to protect the integrity of the scientific review process.

AABT is a professional, interdisciplinary organization that is concerned with the application of behavioral and cognitive sciences to understanding human behavior, developing interventions to enhance the human condition, and promoting the appropriate utilization of these interventions. We have approximately 4000 members. Our members are active in conducting research and are engaged in clinical practice working with a wide range of populations including those directly affected by these public health issues.