



...a Multidisciplinary Organization of Health Professionals



Society for Research
on Adolescence

November 12, 2003

Dear Representative:

We are writing on behalf of the Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) and the Society for Research on Adolescence (SRA) to express our strongest support for the peer review system at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and our great concern regarding recent developments that challenge the integrity of that process.

The Society for Adolescent Medicine (SAM) is a multidisciplinary organization committed to improving the physical and psychosocial health and well-being of all adolescents. The Society for Research on Adolescence (SRA) is a multidisciplinary, international organization dedicated to understanding adolescence through research and dissemination. Members of our organizations are actively involved in NIH research that contributes to the health and well-being of young people.

The NIH is admired and emulated worldwide. Through its peer review process, NIH exemplifies the highest level of scientific integrity in the conduct of research, ensuring that only proposals that meet the highest standards will receive support with federal funds. Every study that goes through the NIH peer review process is evaluated based on a thorough review of its scientific and technical merit, the soundness of its methodology, the credentials of its investigators, the potential for benefiting health, and the likelihood that it will make a significant contribution to advancing the body of science.

Congressional oversight plays an important role in ensuring that NIH fulfills its mission and that resources dedicated to medical research are well spent. Nevertheless, SAM and SRA are deeply concerned about recent efforts to subject individual research projects to additional scrutiny based on political or ideological criteria. It is essential that the determination of scientific merit remain free from interference from interest groups or political entities that seek to promote their own beliefs.

Many of the studies facing additional scrutiny focus on the most serious health problems facing American youth. Interference with these studies threatens the willingness of researchers and institutions to address the most complicated and important public health problems and undermines the scientific integrity that should be the basis of sound public health strategies.

The Society for Adolescent Medicine and the Society for Research on Adolescence urge you to support the scientific peer review process at NIH as the standard by which all research should be judged.

Sincerely,

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cc: Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni, Director, National Institutes of Health