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Geometric
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1716
Obesity
and life
expectancy



effort to ban all human cloning, I think the new agenda builds on its core principles,” added Cohen in an e-mail. “Should we produce human embryos solely as research tools, and should we begin down the road of making babies in radical new ways. ... This is the debate America deserves.”

As a third prong in its self-identified “offensive,” the document suggests that the National Institutes of Health fund research

into methods of obtaining stem cells that do not require the destruction of an embryo (*Science*, 24 December 2004, p. 2174).

Kass thinks time is of the essence: “We have today an Administration and a Congress as friendly to human life and human dignity as we are likely to have for many years to come,” the document says. “[These goals] allow us to respond to the inability to pass the cloning ban not by yielding ground

but by seizing the initiative.”

Others warn against new laws governing an ever-changing scientific landscape and suggest that the research community should continue to police itself. “A blanket opposition [to advanced biotechnical procedures] could throw out things that could be beneficial and ... nonobjectionable,” said David Magnus, director of the Stanford Center for Biomedical Ethics. **—ELI KINTISCH**

CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST POLICY

NIH Rules Make Some Pack, Others Plead

The ethics crackdown announced last month at the National Institutes of Health continues to reverberate across the Bethesda, Maryland, campus. Last week, three federal scientists whose consulting came under fire last year announced their departures. A group of senior scientists urged NIH Director Elias Zerhouni to adopt a more modest ethics plan. And rank-and-file researchers say the stringent new rules are upending their lives, perhaps even to the point of divorce.

Last week, National Cancer Institute (NCI) pathologist Lance Liotta and research partner Emanuel Petricoin of the Food and Drug Administration announced they're leaving shortly to head a new proteomics center at George Mason University (GMU) in Fairfax, Virginia. And the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's Bryan Brewer, who the *Los Angeles Times* has suggested improperly endorsed a cholesterol drug, is retiring from NIH and joining a nearby hospital. NIH ethics officials had approved their outside activities. These cases helped trigger a ban on health-related consulting by NIH staff, even for non-profits, and stringent limits on owning stock (*Science*, 11 February, p. 824).

Liotta and Petricoin co-invented a new method for detecting ovarian cancer by analyzing patterns of proteins found in blood. The approach led to a new clinical proteomics program at their two agencies. But the pair ran into trouble for consulting with a competitor to a firm that held an NCI cooperative agreement they oversaw (*Science*, 28 May 2004, p. 1222).

Liotta and Petricoin declined comment on their job move. GMU associate dean for research Vikas Chandhoke says the two men will be “strongly encouraged” to consult: “It's very healthy for science as well as faculty development.”

Meanwhile, NIH's intramural Assembly

of Scientists released an alternative to what its leader, ethicist Ezekiel Emanuel, calls the agency's “draconian” rules. Their proposal would allow biomedical stock ownership and limited consulting by most intramural scientists. NIH Deputy Director Raynard Kington says NIH and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will consider these comments, but that “the basic rules ... are not going to change.”

The weeks since the new rules were announced have been very stressful, say NIH



New academics. NIH's Lance Liotta (left) and FDA's Emanuel Petricoin are headed for George Mason University.

staffers. Scientists had until 4 March to end prohibited outside activities or request an extension. But biochemist Herbert Tabor of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases is still waiting to confirm a temporary decision that he can continue a 30-year stint as editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*. And Ashani Weeraratna of the National Institute on Aging had to cancel a trip to New York City to speak at an international melanoma symposium

because NIH failed to approve her acceptance of a \$200 train ticket. It was “embarrassing” and a “hardship” for the organizers, wrote Weeraratna in a comment to HHS.

Researchers also point to problems with NIH's plan to allow them to perform scholarly activities as federal employees. For example, Robert Nussbaum, a lab chief at the National Human Genome Research Institute and past president of the American Society of Human Genetics, is seeking an exception to serve on the society's board on his own time. Nussbaum says, “I realized it wouldn't work” as part of his day job because he wants to help the society raise funds and educate members about the political process. Another scientist worries about the propriety of reviewing grant proposals for work on human embryonic stem cells for a foundation, because federal funds cannot be used for some of this work. “They should have asked [us] what the impact would be on the ground,” says the scientist, who requested anonymity.

Michael Brownstein, a 33-year veteran of the National Institute of Mental Health, says he is considering extreme measures to preserve his investments. Brownstein retired last fall because of “commitments I wanted to keep” with companies and foundations; he is moving to the Venter Institute. But his wife, neuroscientist Eva Mezey, still works at NIH. Because even biotech stocks owned by a senior employee's spouse are now verboten under the new NIH rules, the couple is weighing a divorce to avoid a July deadline for divesting. “It's a real option for us. Pretty stupid,” Brownstein says. **—JOCELYN KAISER**

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NIH Rules Make Some Pack, Others Plead

Jocelyn Kaiser

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