

Building 37, Room 6A09
National Cancer Institute
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Bob,

I have reviewed in considerable detail the public record setting forth the history of the discovery and characterization of the virus causing AIDS. This record unequivocally sets out the fine cooperative efforts between you and the National Cancer Institute on the one hand, and Luc Montagnier and the Pasteur Institute on the other.

Unfortunately, I realize that a number of my comments concerning the work leading to the discovery of HTLV-III/LAV, including those made while an employee of the Center for Disease Control, those to Randy Shilts for his book And the Band Played On, others at a recent meeting of Health and Hospital Administrators in Atlanta, those to Mr. Crewdson of the Chicago Tribune, and again more recently some to Mr. Blow of Regardie are incorrect and were made without full knowledge on my part.

Accordingly, I wish to set the record straight as to my understanding of your work. First, I do not believe that your original isolates of HTLV-III were contaminated, either accidentally or on purpose, by LAV. There is no evidence whatsoever to support the notion that HTLV-III was pilfered in this fashion. I am fully aware that you described 48 separate, distinct isolates in your first paper, not one. In addition, you reported in the same series of papers the first continuous and mass production of six of the 48 isolates, which represented the major technical breakthrough in the field. Many of these isolates were proven to be quite distinct from the one from the Pasteur. Second, it is gross distortion to attribute the discovery of the AIDS virus solely to the French. Dr. Montagnier's 1983 paper, though obviously a critical paper, did not prove the etiology of the disease and is simply a part of the overall joint effort which isolated HIV and linked it conclusively to the cause of AIDS. The Chronology of AIDS research, published in the April 1987 Nature by you and Montagnier, makes clear the vital discoveries made by you, Dr. Montagnier, and your colleagues in the search for the AIDS virus.

Finally, I wish to apologize for the tone of many of my remarks in the past. They have done you, your colleagues and the international scientific collaboration against AIDS an unwarranted disservice. NIH and the Pasteur Institute have worked to clear the air and I wish to join with others, like the scientists whose Correspondence appeared in the March 1987 Nature, to congratulate you in your work, and to urge you to continue to devote your fullest efforts in the fight against AIDS.

Sincerely yours,

Donald P. Francis, M.D., D.Sc.

and it was the French virus that
obtained by the *Chicago Tri-*
uple of times, apparently to
aimed that the French virus
ann asked Mikulas Popovic,
samples of virus that had been
... speak"

Pen pal:

above, the fake fan
letter—written by
Gallo to Gallo—that
he tried to make
AIDS researcher Don
Francis sign; *left*,