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Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
Rockledge One, Suite 1050  
6705 Rockledge Drive - MSC 7982  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-7982  
Home Page: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm>

FOR EXPRESS MAIL:

Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare  
Rockledge One, Suite 1050  
6705 Rockledge Drive  
Bethesda, Maryland 20817  
Telephone: (301) 496-7163 ext 7  
Facsimile: (301) 402-7065

April 10, 2001

Re: Animal Welfare Assurance  
#A3858-01

Frederick Coulston, Ph.D.  
Institutional Official for Animal Welfare  
Coulston Foundation  
1300 La Velle Road  
Alamogordo, NM 88310

Dear Dr. Coulston:

The Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) acknowledges receipt of the Coulston Foundation (CF) ninth monthly report covering March 2001. Based on its evaluation of the information contained in the report, OLAW has the following comments.

1) OLAW acknowledges that NAME tentatively accepted a clinical veterinary position—pending management decisions about the animals at the Holloman and La Velle facilities. We also understand that NAME agreed to serve as consulting veterinary pathologist.

2) Based on the information provided, we understand that the CF's two clinical veterinarians (Drs. Albersmeyer and Langner) are practicing veterinary medicine at the CF under provisions of the New Mexico Board of Veterinary Medicine and that they are supervised by a qualified (ACLAM diplomate) individual (Dr. Heisey).

Regarding the earlier CF commitments that "Dr. Heisey [and] Dr. Langner ... will take the jurisprudence portion of the New Mexico licensing examination," this Office notes that the promises were made in correspondence copied to the CF CEO and Attending Veterinarian, and that OLAW responses have included the CF Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) Chair. It comes as a surprise, therefore, to learn many months later that the CF no longer considers them valid, because they "...were made by Dr. Couch as Institutional Official." The relationship between this Office and the CF is based on trust—that the CF will adhere to the commitments made in its Animal Welfare Assurance and in correspondence and other communication from the IO who is formally designated and authorized by the CEO to represent the CF. In view of the apparent lack of gravity given to this interrelationship, this Office is seriously concerned that the trust relationship is in jeopardy. Consequently, regarding previous commitments made by the former IO of the CF (Dr. Couch), **please review all previous correspondence to this Office signed by Dr. Couch and notify OLAW of any commitments or promises made by him, as IO of the CF which the CF now does not intend to honor.** See also item 7, below.

3) This Office understands that, during March, several PHS-supported activities were conducted at the CF. For 1-RO1DK54439-01, Dr. Langner reportedly contributed effort of his time as clinical veterinarian. We understand that PHS-supported protocols CF 991609, CF 990809, and CF 000809 concluded as of April 1, and that Dr. Heisey expended effort of his time in their management. We recognize that project CF 982409 was discontinued when the animals were transferred elsewhere.

Regarding project 5U42RR03582-11, we are aware that the breeding colony has been in a non-breeding status for some time. Unless notified to the contrary we also understand that the CF continues to provide clinical veterinary support to all the animals in that colony.

4) Based on the information provided, OLAW understands that CF veterinarians continued to provide clinical services to non PHS-supported activities in December. We further recognize that the time commitments to these activities by these individuals were minimal.

5) OLAW understands that a veterinary clinician with expertise in ultrasonography was approached about, and is considering, giving on-site training in the specialty. We understand that no other outside physicians or veterinarians were consulted during March.

6) Because the unaffiliated members of the ACUC did not attend NRMU training course in December 2000, we understood they were to be scheduled to view the videotape of the course on March 7, 2001. Based on the information provided, the one unaffiliated member who attended the March 7 meeting was given videotapes and the accompanying training materials. **Please notify this Office in your next monthly report of the status of the unaffiliated members' training.**

7) Based on a review of correspondence from the CF to this Office, it appears that the CF has reneged on its commitment to test chimpanzees for infectivity. Information provided to this Office is as summarized as follows:

On November 30, 2000, the CF stated "All animals considered "red" or viral exposed have been identified. It is planned to test all these animals to determine their infectivity. ... When infectivity of animals is determined, they will be segregated appropriately. ..."

On January 5, 2001, CF stated "

On January 5, 2001, the CF stated that "serum will be collected from all CF-owned chimpanzees at the time of their scheduled semiannual physicals ... Any additional animals identified as being infective will be relocated ... We anticipate that few, if any animals identified as "clean" will be found to be infective ...."

On February 27, 2001, the CF stated that 19 HBV and HIV exposed animals were recently tested for viral titers and that testing of the remainder (40 chimpanzees) for antibodies was expected to be completed by late March 2001.

On March 31, 2001 the CF, in the absence of remarks about the results of testing, stated that "No animals in the "clean" portion of the colony have been exposed to HBV, HCV, or HIV" and that "It is highly unlikely that any of the "clean" colony has been infected with HBV, HCV, or

HIV" and that [testing] "would be a large expense solely to confirm what is already known."

The conclusion that infectivity of the animals is already known does not seem to square with the uncertainty expressed about exposure/infection, explain why it was not possible to track the viral exposure of chimpanzee 1489 (see OLAW's October 4, 2000 letter and originally stated concern), or, cost considerations aside, account for rejecting the CF's previous commitments to test viral exposed chimpanzees to determine their infectivity. **Please explain this abrupt reversal of the CF's rationale and commitment to test chimpanzees for infectivity.**

8) We understand that the installation of back up lighting in the surgical suite at the La Velle Road facility actually refers to installing a back up electrical generator.

9) This Office understands that the CF currently has one clinical veterinarian at the La Velle facility and one at the Holloman facility, with a the Director of Veterinary Science spending time at either facility as needed. We understand that, in anticipation that it will be relieved of the responsibility for chimpanzees at the Holloman facility, the CF has evidently ceased its efforts to recruit additional veterinary staff. **Please explain whether the three veterinarians the CF feels will be adequate in the future to manage the colonies at the La Velle facility are clinical veterinarians and whether they include consideration of** NAME

OLAW looks forward to receiving the CF's next monthly report by April 30, 2001.

Thank you for attention to these matters.

Sincerely,



Stephen Potkay, VMD  
Director, Division of Compliance Oversight  
Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare

cc: Dr. Michael Albersmeyer - Chair, ACUC  
Dr. Robert M. Gibbens - USDA